A

# DISCOURSE

Repreſenting the Sufficient

# MANIFESTATION

Of the Will of *GOD* to his CHURCH in all its ſeveral Periods and Diſpenſations.

---

BY

*JAMES CANARIES.*

---

*Rom.* chap. 12. ver. 1.

------*your Reaſonable Service.*

---

*EDINBURGH*,

Printed by the Heir of *Andrew Anderſon*, Printer to the Kings moſt Sacred Majeſty, Anno DOM. 1684.

C420

# EDINBURGH,

*August* 21. 1684.

THE Lords of His Majesty's Privy Council, Having considered an Address made to them by Mr. *James Cunaries*, Desiring licence to him or his Assigneys for printing a Book compiled by him, Entituled, *A Discourse Representing the Sufficient Manifestation of the Will of* GOD *to his Church in all its several Periods and Dispensations*, for such time as they should think fit. Do hereby grant licence to the said Mr. *James Cunaries*, or his Assigneys, for printing the said Book compiled by him, for the space of Nineteen Years after the date hereof. And prohibits and discharges all other Persons to Print, Re-print, or Import into this Kingdom any of the said Books during the space so claid, without licence from the Author or his Assigneys, under the pain of Confiscation of the same to his and their use, besides what other Punishment the Council shall think fit to inflict upon them, in [illegible] contraveen. Extracted by me

COLIN MKENZIE. Cls. Stl. Concilij.

# ERRATA.

[illegible] Line 24. read recommend. p. 42. l. 11. r. em[illegible] p. 81. l. 1. for tumbling, r. tumble. p. 105. [illegible] p. 120. l. 9. for 71. r. 76. p. 150. [illegible] for being nearly guilty in a manner, r. being found [illegible] p. 221. l. 13. for here, r. here, [illegible] after considerable add of.

# EDINBURGH,

*August* 21. 1684.

THE Lords of His Majesty's Privy Council, Having considered an Address made to them by Mr. *James Canaries*, Desiring licence to him or his Assigneys for printing a Book compiled by him, Entituled, *A Discourse Representing the Sufficient Manifestation of the Will of GOD to his Church in all its several Periods and Dispensations*, for such time as they should think fit. Do hereby grant licence to the said Mr. *James Canaries*, or his Assigneys, for printing the said Book compiled by him, for the space of Nineteen Years after the date hereof. And prohibits and discharges all other Persons to Print, Re-print, or Import into this Kingdom any of the saids Books during the space foresaid, without licence from the Author or his Assigneys, under the pain of Confiscation of the same to his and their use, besides what other Punishment the Council shall think fit to inflict upon them, in case they contraveen. Extracted by me

*COLIN M'KENZIE*. Cls. Stl. Concilij.

## ERRATA.

PAge 32. Line 24. read *recommend*. p. 43. l. 11: r. *embellish*. p. 81. l. 1. for *tumbling*, r. *tumble*. p. 105. l. 8. after *for*, add *ever*. p. 130. l. 9. for *ye*, r. *yet*. p. 156. l. 19 20. for *being doubly guilty in a manner*, r. *being found doubly guilty in a matter*. p. 221. l. 13. for *here*, r. *how*. p. 290. l. *alt*. after *considerable* add *as*.

A

# DISCOURSE

Repreſenting the Sufficient

# MANIFESTATION

Of the Will of *GOD* to his CHURCH in all its ſeveral Periods and Diſpenſations.

---

BY

*JAMES CANARIES.*

---

*Rom.* chap. 12. ver. 1.

*-----your Reaſonable Service.*

---

*EDINBURGH*,

Printed by the Heir of *Andrew Anderſon*, Printer to the Kings moſt Sacred Majeſty, Anno *DOM.* 1684.

# DISCOURSE

Concerning the Subject

# MANIFESTATION

Of the Will of GOD to his

# CHURCH in all its

Several Periods and

Dispensations.

By

JAMES CAMPBELL.

EDINBURGH

To the Right Honourable

# JAMES

EARL OF

# PERTH, &c.

Lord High-Chancellor

OF

# SCOTLAND.

*My Lord,*

NOW when the whole Kingdom is resounding with the loudest Acclamations of Joy for that late Felicity, which our Gracious KING has vouchsaft us, in bestowing upon us such a Chancellor, as equally answers all our *former*, and even puts to silence the most eager of our *present* Wishes; I may (I doubt not) presume

ſume upon a favourable Smile to be deign'd this ſmall Mite of Congratulation, which my Zealous, tho poor Endeavours throngs in with the publick Croud.

And altho ſuch Addreſſes, upon the like Occaſion, uſe rather to be interpreted by all the environing World, as nothing elſe but the inſinuative and deſigning Streins of Flattery and Complement, and ſuch Courtly Shadows, as only follow and await upon Greatneſs and Preferment: Yet the univerſal evidence of real exultancy which appears becauſe of Your Lordſhips Promotion (whereby 'tis hard to diſtinguiſh whether every one reſents more the new Acceſſion to Your Lordſhips Glory, or That to the Happineſs which he ſhares in the common advantage of his whole Nation), takes off all reaſonable ſuſpition of any ſuch baſe and unworthy intendments from Thoſe, which nothing can reſtrain from the boldneſs of preſſing forward to expreſs the ingenuous acknowledgments, It does every where engage. And he that would aim

at accoasting Your Lordship with any cajoling or adulatory methods, behov'd, not only to be ignorant how ungrateful all such are to that sincerest Modesty, which is the very Enamel and Decorement of those other radiant Vertues whereby Your Lordship is so eminently ennobled and adorned; but also to contrive new Raptures for his Blandishments, which never yet any under that Name were accustomed unto, when to say of Your Lordship but what You justly deserve, would entirely exhaust whatever has hitherto been soar'd the most highly in the wonted Eulogies and Praises: Neither of which I shall ever be guilty.

But, My Lord, I presume that towards a Year agoe it was made known to Your Lordship, that I was design'd to prostrate the first of my Labours at Your Lordships feet, there to show with what Veneration Your Lordships Vertues and Noble Learning (which mutually borrows from, and adds Lustre unto These, and Your Noble Self) did overtake a Man, whom no other bonds could tye

to

to any ſuch Admiration and Regard; as never yet having been ſo far honoured, as to be but once more ſeen in the face by Your Lordſhip, than any of thoſe numerous Throngs which conſtantly flock with raviſhment to behold the Ornament and Darling of the *Scottiſh* Nation. And ſo it is ſtill the Earl of *Perth*, whoſe Name I have dar'd to prefix unto theſe Papers, and not the Chancellor; or only the Chancellor, becauſe it is the Earl of *Perth* that is He.

That our preſent happineſs in Your Lordſhip may continue while a *ſero in Cœlum redeas* be at once wholly applyed and verified, is undoubtedly the fervent Prayer of every one, who loves the True Religion, his KING, and Countrey, and own ſelf; but eſpecially of,

*My Lord,*

*Your Lordſhips moſt humble*
*and moſt devoted Servant,*
JAMES CANARIES.

# The Occasion.

*AFter I had returned from* Rome, *it was impos'd upon me to give an account of its Religion. whereupon I wrote several Papers upon the pretended Infallibility of that Church. But having observ'd that the Thread of the Discourse was sometimes interrupted by following the Analogy betwixt the prior Dispensations to the Christian, and it, wherein the* Romanists *fancy they find mighty advantage; I thought it would not be amiss, should I, by way of* Apparatus, *draw up the whole Scheme of the several Dispensations whereby GOD has manifested himself to the world; that so, in pursuance of my former Theme, I might but refer to it, when ever the occasion requir'd that. I should run the parallel betwixt any of them. And therefore I wrote some few Sheets to that purpose; wherein I did especially consider the* Intrinsick *sufficiency of the Manifestation in all the several Stages and Revolutions of the Church.*

*But before I could accomplish my first Task (for since ever I came back to* Scotland *my condition has been such, that I could not do any thing but by snatches), I bethought me of another design, which might still be subservient to the former, and perhaps be no less* taking, *nor* useful *either, than it: Which was the Resolving of Faith; and therein shewing that the Papists do endeavour to rob us of our Reason and Senses too, and overturn that* rational certainty *and* evidence *which we have of the truth of the Christian Religion. And this I brought very near to a close. So that of the two Discourses I have at least about fourty Sheets.*

But

*But at last some pressing circumstances having even forc'd me now to appear in publick, I resolv'd to take my hazard of that little Discourse which I had wrote as an* Apparatus *to the rest, and thereby make an essay how my way of writing would relish the World. And so I went to the Press. It is true I had but then about eight Sheets of it in Copy, tho within these five weeks since, it has swell'd to the bulk wherein now it is. But in the interim I judg'd it pertinent to joyn the extrinsick sufficiency of the Manifestation, with the* intrinsick, *that as the* one *might serve the Discourse about the boasted Infallibility of the* Roman Church, *so the* other *might That about the Resolution of Faith, and demonstrating the* evident *truth of the Christian Religion against the Papists, who both expressly deny, and hold such Principles and Opinions as quite supplant it.*

*BUT I perswade my self, that even abstracting from all this, my pains in this Discourse shall not be in vain. For tho the world be almost nauseated with Books on this Subject, yet he must be a great stranger in it who knows not, that the need of reinforcing assaults on that head is not one whit less than ever: There being hardly any more à-la-mode intertainment than to droll and baffle Religion, as if it were the only thing which deserv'd most to be hiss't at, and hooted out of all rational and virtuoso Company. So that tho there be many that carry the Name of Christians, yet, alas! it is to be fear'd there is not such a number of those, who own the Power, which should influence all that are really such.*

*Besides, Even among those who truly do so, there are too many that flatter themselves with a superficial and perfunctorious belief of its Doctrines; so that if they have learned but the very first Alphabet and Catechism of it in their younger years, they think they need not any more for their whole life thereafter; as if they had already provided themselves abundantly of all that were look't upon as* Necessary: *and therefore cared not to busie their heads with what were consequentially no more but* arbitrary *and* superfluous. *Whereas, has GOD been so vouchsafing as to display himself to Mankind at that rate,*

rate, at which this Diſcourſe has ſhewed he has done; and ſhall any read that, and yet ſatisfie himſelf with ſuch courſe and vulgar notions of him, or ſuch a general confus'd knowledge of the Myſteries of that Religion, which he has ſo induſtriouſly imparted? And therefore to both theſe ſorts of People this Diſcourſe may fortune not to be altogether impertinent.

Far be it from me to be either ſo arrogant or preſumptuous, as vainly to fancy that my poor endeavours ſhall prove ſucceſsful where ſo many excellent and vigorous Addreſſes has been repel'd, and come off with an affront; if to be ſo miſerably fruſtrated can be reputed one. But I behov'd to comply with what I mentioned before. And perhaps there may be ſome one thing or another in mine, that may touch ſome one body or another, which would read over all thoſe more elaborate Writings with a perfect coldneſs and indifferency. And if there be, all my labour is but too much recompenſed. Beſides the newneſs of a thing uſes to recommend it, when nothing elſe can do that.

Indeed this may be called new, tho there ſhould not be ſo much as one Conſideration in it that were ſo. Becauſe I owe it purely to the Bible and my own reeflections: having been ſo very jealous to avoid being a Plagiary on a Subject that is ſo trite and common, that, from my firſt beginning to write while I put an end to it, I carefully declin'd the looking but never ſo overly into any Book of this nature; ſave it was that ſacred one, wherein our Religion is moſt divinely eſtabliſhed. So that I have taken the adventure to preſent the World with my own native and genuine thoughts, and ſuch Obſervations as only a ſerious peruſing and conſidering the Holy Bible did ſuggeſt unto me.

SOME perhaps will be ſtumbled at ſeveral of my arguings drawn from the Attributs of GOD; as if they were not ſo reſpectfully expreſt, as ſuch a dreadful and ſacred ſubject ſeems to require they ſhould be. But all ſuch muſt know, that all thoſe flow from the Principles of our Natural Religion, and the dictats of meer Reaſon. Now we have no other way from theſe, to judge of any End that GOD could deſign in his Providence toward Man, but by conſidering the agreeableneſs of it

with

*with those adorable Perfections which shine from his Nature and Essence. And therefore there is no other* Medium *whereby we can conclude that such or such an end could not have mov'd him, but what can be gathered from the absurdities that would follow from the comparing of it with his glorious Attributes. And he knows ill how to manage an Argument* ab absurdo, *who makes it not as odious as he can.*

*But then the* odiousness *and* absurdity *falls not upon the thing it self absolutely considered, but only upon it as it lyes under such or such a Supposition. And so, the inference of these does but remove from it that other thing which is suppos'd; because, since nothing can devolve such an odiousness or absurdity upon what is essentially uncapable of being justly reproacht with either (as every thing must be, which can be the Subject of such an Argument), the proving, that from such a supposition such an absurdity would inevitably follow, does manifestly but prove, that such a supposition can never be more but a bare supposition for argument sake, or that it is impossible that things can be really so as they are suppos'd. And this, as is clear, is so far from involving any disrespect to that thing from which that supposition is remov'd, that on the contrary, it argues the greatest regard unto it imaginable; when it suffers not any thing to be compatible with it that would inser such an absurdity and odiousness upon it.*

*Thus it is that* GOD *is demonstrated not to be possibly the Author of Sin, by an argument drawn from his Holiness, and what an absurdity would ensue, if it were contaminated and defil'd with those loathsome pollutions which frail creatures can be guilty of. And who can fancy that* GOD *is any wise disparag'd by the most odious consequences that could be gathered from his being so suppos'd to be the Author of what is so repugnant to that One of his Attributes.*

*Wherefore the like must be said in reference to the respective suppositions under which the rest can proportionably fall. And so the charging of* GOD *with* Foolishness, *or* Injustice, *or* Cruelty, *or* Rigour, *&c. under such suppositions; sounds no more harshly, than under another, to call him an Adulterer, a Whoremonger, a Murderer, or Thief, &c. where, it being palpable*

palpable that he cannot possibly be either, there is no affront done to his sacred Name, by such suppos'd imputations; but only by an evident argument upon that account, he is prov'd not to be such as would infer them.

But he must be very disingenuous, who does not acknowledge with what veneration and prostrate regard every Page of this Discourse treats the Divine Majesty; his absolute Power and Soveraignty being exalted by it, above all that we can either think or imagine: and all his several Attributs considered with such a becoming relation to one another, as their all being infinite can possibly exact: so that we have Reason to guess what may belong to what is so.

AS for the Style; I confess I am somewhat suspitious, now when I see it in print, that in some places it may give occasion to the sullen and morose part of the world to construct that there is more than enough of affectation in it. But none will make such a gloss who truly knows me. For had I been, either of the humour, or at the pains, as to affect Language, I might perhaps have pleas'd them better. But the truth is, I have ever looked upon the wording of a thing, as but an outward circumstance wherein a man may take his own liberty. And therefore I have, out of a certain kind of ingenuity, indulg'd the present fancy of expressing my self, so as at every opportunity it offered it self unto me. Neither use I to notice any thing of a Book so much, as the Method and contrivance, the close pursuance of the main design, and with what solid and convincing reason and sense it manages that. And I presume to assure my self that mine has not fail'd too sorely in either of these. And so let such People think of the Strain what they will, I am not much to trouble my self. Assuredly no more, than if I should be challenged because the Cuff of my Coat sleeve were not of that exactly modish Cut which anothers is of.

Truly I use to laugh when I hear of a Fashion of Language, as if forsooth there ought to be any other, whatever there may be, than that which can best serve to make ones conceipts to be understood; so that the words be not exotick or flatly strain'd. And some can only do that in long and fluent Periods: some

only

only in short and little brisk Sentences. But in that, if ever any where, unusquisque suo sensu abundet, should take place. And he that would either rack up, or pare off all Language while it was exactly conform to some Procrustes's Bed would certainly exercise no less Tyranny, than did he, who treated the very bodies of Men at that cruel rate.

I am indeed of the opinion, that ordinarily the more rolling Sentences, providing they be not intricat nor entangled, use to contract and couch more matter in less room, than can those that are of the precise Laconick size: as let any try the experiment I'll undertake to show. However if I be guilty of any too much flaunting luxuriancy, it is on the extream, which, I hope, I can much sooner mend, than can he That, who must write sordidly do what he will. And this shall be the last time that I shall have the least shadow of any need for such an Apology, let me have never so little of it now. Only I hope there will be some allowance for one whose years are yet on this side thirty, as to the matter of too much fluency in his language.

And I would desire that none would look upon this Discourse, with any relation to the circumstances of the Author; or as accommodated to suit the peculiar strains of any Profession: for each have their several Airs and Meens. And so I would not have it thought at any wise fit, either for the Pulpit, or any other place where men use to declaim or harangue: since I know that, in several places especially, nothing would be more impertinent for any of them: and on set purpose I suffer'd it to be such.

AND as for those wry Mouths, and petulant saucy Tongues, which seem to have been only shaped for some jest or sarcasme; let them blurt out whatever happens first to come within their teeth; they shall no more move me, nor can the Moon be, at the spiteful snarle and bark of an ugly Cur.

But I have not seldom seen such censorious People virulently carp at an expression, which themselves knew not how to better, when put to it to do so, because they took it so severely to task. And I would not wish any body to be foil'd at a more ridiculous rate, or more flatly to betray themselves, than thus to be found challenging what it had not been in their own power to

have

have secur'd from those their own cavils. For thus they detect their ill nature, and nothing besides. And to do that is the wofullest mischief any can do himself.

FOR a proof of my candour and ingenuity in all this, I shall alledge no more, but that in publishing this Book, I have not condescended to be so far fashionable, as to do it in Masquerade, and either leave the Title Page with a blank for the Authors Name while a second occasion, or borrow and feign another for concealing it. Indeed had one already gain'd credit and renown to his writings, it might be very justly construed a piece of humility and self denial in him to steal out his Books so clandestinely into the world, as that the most inquisitive and curious search to find out the true author, might learn no more, but what it were to meet with a defeat and disappointment. But for one, who never before had any experiment how his works would take, to decline the running the risk of such an adventure, and suppress who it was that gave the World the occasion of being perhaps troubled with such Books as would not quite the cost and the pains; that certainly could never fall under so favourable an interpretation; and any body would think it had but purposely kept himself out of the way from those direct revenges, at least, wherewith he was jealous, too many would pursue him, upon the account of the money and labour he had engaged them to misspend (tho it would not be altogether without their own fault that they did so, when none uses to be forc'd, either to buy, or read a Book). And so, since the first time that one appears in publick, he does it at an hazard, he ought assuredly to be sooner taxt of any thing else, than any disingenuous, or ambitious design, who as publickly exposes himself to all the inconveniencies of that danger which he incurs, as he does That by which he incurs it, and becomes obnoxious unto them. So that had there been either policy or design in my view, these Papers had never carried before them any such Name as James Canaries; especially when my circumstances are such, as make me yet depend upon the world for my fortune in it. But however that shall come about, I must, and will still follow that openness and

and freedom of Spirit; against which hardly any interest can be so prevalent, as to make me, either disguise or dissemble it. And I must ly long at the Pool of Preferment, before any very artificial complyance, or cunning methods, help down my lame accomplishments into the waters. And therefore, with such as they are I intend to crawl out the plain, honest, simple road.

There is indeed another end, than what has been insinuated, for which one might send out anonymous Pieces; viz. that his own Name (not being perchance so famous as were requisite) might not be any wise prejudicial to those works which thus he fears to own: Since, as there is nothing more common, than for a buzzing Authority to recompense even real weaknesses, which he, whose Name struts bigly with it, is guilty of; so, on the other hand, it is no less ordinary for a good cause, not all managed, to suffer upon the account of the obscureness of that Person, who set his hand to it: the vulgar part of mankind using more to notice, who it was that wrote, than what it is that is written. But that is such a childish and unreasonable prejudice in them, that he were more justly to be upbraided with both the Epithets than they, who would contribute the least mite to humour them in it. And Sense is still Sense, from whatever coast it came, to any man that deserves to be character'd as one of it, or understanding.

IN fine then, If I have done well, I'll be encouraged to do more. If I have but done so and so, I'll yet make another tryal to see if I can do better. For I have not embarkt all my Repute in this first Piece. And the whole loss needs be but mine. So I bid my Reader adieu with that just and reasonable Demand.

Carpere vel noli nostra, vel ede tua.

A

# DISCOURSE

## Repreſenting the ſufficient manifeſtation of the Will of God to his Church, in all the ſeveral Periods and Diſpenſations of it.

### Section I.

1. GOD ſurely, in the Creation of Man, cannot be ſuppos'd to have breath'd *the breath of life into his noſtrils*, and to a Body of the moſt delicate and wonderful compoſure, ſuch as (though there had been no more, yet) had irrefragably atteſted Him by whoſe *finger* it was faſhioned, have joyn'd a ſpiritual and heavenly ſubſtance, enriched with all thoſe excellent Faculties and decorements which ren-

der'd it the liveliest Image and resemblance of the *Father of Spirits* himself; for no other end, than only for a while, *either* to whirle about and perplex his curious Brains with some few empty and fruitless Speculations, from which he could not reap the least moment of any solid and real satisfaction proportionable even to the pains he had laid out in his indefatigable re-search after them; *or else* to swill and gratifie all those luxurious appetites and desires which his sanguine and pampered Flesh could itch him withal, but which needed no other Soul, save that of the meerest Animal, to fit any thing for the being abundantly sensible of their highest relish and transports; and *then*, after that little, but *troublesome* or *degenerate* abode in the world, to crumble again, like *the beasts that perish*, unto that former Dust and Nothing whence at first he was formed, and thus miserably dwindle and vanish away unto the damping shades of perpetual darkness and oblivion. For who does not see that then, in framing such an accomplished Creature for no

finer

finer purpoſe but *theſe*, he had acted infinitely more unworthily his own Almighty ſelf, than could that veriest Drudge he had made, when ſo baſely and pitifully employed below the dignity and perfection of thoſe Rational Powers wherewith he was endowed? The diſtance between the illimited Wiſdom, and Power, and Goodneſs, and Sanctity of that Supream Eſſence, and ſuch an *unmeet* and *impertinent* production, as would have been Man for thoſe Vain and Ignoble ends, being incomparably more vaſt than *any* that can be fancied between him, and the moſt trifling or abject condeſcentions unto which he could be deſigned to ſtoop. So does *that firſt one* reſult with ſuch a redoubled exceſs and tranſcendency from *this other*. Now thoſe ſame very Reaſons wherewith we are ſo eminently adorned, cannot but ſuggeſt ſuch becoming thoughts of That which is originally lodged in the Divinity from whom we derived them, as, though purely upon their own account they would not vindicate themſelves from the diſgraceful and moſt calumnious re-

proach of having been only made to truckle unto ſuch mean and ſordid purſuits, yet in regard of It, to force us abhor the monſtruous blaſphemy of aſperſing him with any ſo ridiculous and abſurd a contrivance, which, notwithſtanding he does all things in *number, weight*, and *meaſure*, would inevitably infer he had forgot to obſerve the juſt meaſures, both of his own ſelf, and alſo of that Being he had ſo liberally imparted himſelf unto.

2. Shall it therefore be thought, that, even although he intended him no future recompence to prompt and encourage his endeavours, yet he had beſtowed ſuch intellectual Inducements upon him, in contemplation of thoſe *ſuitable* returns, which juſtly enough he might expect from one to whom he had been ſo profuſely bountiful and vouchſafing: and ſo, that he would ſtudiouſly exert them into performances of ſo elevated a nature as could reflect nothing but praiſe and repute upon, either the *immediate*, or *more remote* Source from which they did iſſue; they being all the *genuine*, and conſequently the *vertu-*

*ous*

*our* exercises of untainted and triumphing Reason. And indeed there are such strong ties in Gratitude, and such amiable and inveagling charms and allurements in Vertue, the loveliest of all Beauties, when lookt upon with any serious and unclouded eye; as that none (taking notice of things as they lye obvious only to Speculation) but would conclude it were altogether impossible for any Rational Beeing, either to be so unthankful to its Maker, as not to be alwayes most anxious about that wherein his Honour and Glory were concerned; or yet so hugely inconsiderate of its own interest, as to neglect or abandon what were so very capable to enhance and adorn it, and to yield it those purer and refin'd satisfactions, which are most *congruous*, and therefore most *ravishing* to that its generous and immaterial complexion, whereof nothing, but that it owed it not to its own self, could keep it from being proud and ostentive. But, alas! How much does equally *woful* and *daily* Experience quite baffle and confound all the most flattering appearance of that

goodly Scheme and Contemplation? And is there any who may not hourly obſerve how much, in this preſent order of things, the Bruitiſh and Senſitive part of man has obtain'd the domineering aſcendant over the Rational and Divine; how much the poor deprav'd Creature is dragg'd and hurried head-long whitherſoever the controling violence of inordinate and impetuous Paſſions does puſh and compel him; and how prevalent an influence theſe tyrannous Uſurpers gets upon that very Soul which they ſo ſadly do enſlave, as ordinarily to force even its niceſt judgement and diſcretion, and make it ſubſcribe to its own Vaſſalage, by *thinking* that beſt, which it has come to *like* ſo? And all this, even where ſuch a Religion, as propoſes the moſt tranſcendent rewards, and threatens no leſs dreadful puniſhments, does univerſally poſſeſs the belief and convictions of men. And ſo *quam rara avis in terris*, how much a Phœnix would any ſuch *Virtuoſo* be, as (in this ſuppoſition, of no conditional Promiſes anent a future happineſs or miſery, to animate and conſtrain

ſtrain his obedience) would thus ſtruggle againſt the Current and Stream of his moſt beloved and powerful inclinations, and deny himſelf of all thoſe tickling pleaſures and delights which would entice and bewitch him ſo much in this his frail and carnal eſtate? And therefore to have made Mankind *only* upon intuition of ſuch difficult and extraordinary improvements, without any other bonds over it to ingage unto theſe, than what wer freſhly mentioned; had undoubtedly as much expos'd the Wiſdom of the Maker (not to ſpeak of any other of his Attributes) unto the cenſure and even ludibrie of thoſe ſame very Creatures, as their vitious practices would commonly diſappoint and defeat it; and ſo, as the accompliſhment of his deſign was obnoxious to the moſt uncertain contingency and fortuitouſneſs of the meereſt adventure. Since nothing can be more apt to devolve the imputation of fooliſhneſs upon one, than that he has been at much expence and induſtry, without the hopeful proſpect of any ſure advantage to redound unto him

from

from either; but with the clear foresight of *so little*, as could not be considerable in the vast croud of those plentiful incomes, which only bore proportion unto what ought rationally to have been the full extent and measure of his expectations. But what lump of Earth dares be so insolent, as but to dream that the infinite Majesty of Heaven and Earth too, could have so wretchedly sitten beside his Cushion, in any managery of that Omnipotence, which borrows all its merit to be ador'd from the Wisdom, no less boundless, by which it is governed?

2. It is then most evident that the end for which God did creat Man a Reasonable Being was, that all the rest of this material World serving him only by Instinct and the *necessary* Propensions of Nature, he, for whom especially it was made, and who was to be the soveraign Lord and Inhabitant of it, might do *so* by a *free* and vertuous obedience; and therefore, if complyant with his duty, be eternally blest with the more immediate fruition of His own self, and those most exquisite and rapturous

turous delights which cannot but flow from such an enjoyment; but if perverse and flagitious, then as eternally consign'd unto all the direful horrours and torments that his provocked Justice could pour out upon him. For tho upon the score of that absolute dominion which he cannot but have over his own Creature and the workmanship of his hands, he might have exacted from him whatever observance had suited best with his pleasure; and that without the least tender of any reward or compensation, but upon terms of the highest penalties that his infinite Power could inflict: and so he might have got him, either to persist in an inviolable obsequiousness to his Commands; or else to become the miserable object of his utmost Fury and Indignation: and thus glorified himself, if not in the gratitude and submission of such a thing as had purely emerg'd from the arbitrary impulse of his own Will, yet at least in the rigorous punishment and condemnation of its boldest extravagancies and misdemeanors. Yet it can never be imagin'd that He,

who

who is no respecter of other Persons, should be so very partial to his own Attributes, as to promote and advance the glory of any one of them to the diminution and neglect of any of the rest. And therefore, He not being all Power or Justice, but as much Goodness and Love too, as either; it cannot but be thought that *these* also must equally have their share of what was to result from the Creation of that rational Beeing: and so that it was as much to communicate and profuse himself unto such a Creature, that he condescended to vouchsafe it an existence; as to exerce any irresistible Soveraignty over it, which, by making it to live in a full and constant acknowledgment of its dependence upon him without any other inducement than what arose meerly from its *fears*, could but exalt his Supream Power and Dominion; and would still leave it dubious whether he had any the least tincture of Goodness in him at all. Nay, he is so essentially happy in the eternal possession of his own Infinite Self, that he can receive no accession to his

Bliss

Bliſs by the moſt exuberant contributions of any thing from without, even tho it were poſſible for it not to have ſprung from the Almighty *Fiat* of his meereſt good pleaſure; but far leſs by the pooreſt endeavours of what borders ſo much upon Nothing, that as it owes its not having continued always to skulk un-notic'd within the darkeſt Confines of *that*, purely unto the voluntary exertion of his Power; ſo it is unto the ſame cauſe it is every Minut beholden for its not returning thither again. And ſince it is thus with him, there can be nothing more palpable, than that the original and primary deſign upon which he was mov'd to allow any beeing unto Man, was, not to encreaſe, but impart his Felicity; and conſequently that none of his ſeverer Attributes could have inclin'd him to rear ſuch an effect, but in ſo far as they were to take place, after its own ſelf, by its higheſt ingratitude and prevarications, had become uncapable of his kindneſs and favours, and demerited to be thrown over unto the harſher methods of his

Wrath

Wrath and Revenge. But yet on the other hand, it was not fit he ſhould have altogether precluded himſelf from making any other manifeſtation of his excellencies, than what might appear in one great effort of his Goodneſs and Bounty. Wherefore, tho theſe carried him out with the moſt tender and benign inclinations toward that new production which he had made ſo much to copy and reſemble himſelf; yet had he ſo infinitely indulg'd them, as, immediatly upon his having created Man, to have rapt him up unto thoſe immortal Felicities which were *chiefly*, but not *abſolutely* intended him; he had left no room in that whole Diſpenſation, either for his Juſtice, or Mercy, (thoſe two oppoſite, but moſt reſplendent Jewels of his eternal Crown) to ſhine and evidence themſelves. As then he made Man a rational and free Agent, that he might be capable as well to *obey*, as *enjoy* himſelf; So, that none of his Attributes might be ſmother'd or eclips'd by any of the reſt, however propenſe he was to be good and liberal unto him; yet

yet he muſt have entail'd his being ſo upon that obedience whereof man himſelf was to be the ſole maſter, and which entirely depended upon the unforced exerciſe of his own freedom and liberty: ſince without he had thus made a Probationer of him, and then wrought upon his humor with conditional Promiſes and Threats; it had been perfectly impoſſible but that ſome of theſe his Attributs which now are moſt conſpicuous and wonderful, had to all eternity lyen envelopt in the thickeſt wrappings of ignorance and obſcurity. And thus we ſee upon what account Man was made Reaſonable, accordingly as the firſt ſentence of this Paragraph did expreſs it.

## Section II.

1. NOW God having, upon condition of ſuch a future reward, or puniſhment, engag'd him to ſerve and worſhip Himſelf, and to improve and beautifie his own Nature with thoſe elevated

vated Vertues which might beſt ſuit the
loſty Character and Expectation of ſuch a
Votary; He muſt of neceſſity have fur-
niſh'd him with *ſufficient* Means whereby
he may be directed how to anſwer that O-
bligation aright, and pay the homage it
exacts accordingly as his will is pleas'd to
impoſe and preſcribe it. Otherwiſe he be-
hov'd to have left it wholly to his own
diſcretion to chooſe, with *Micah*, his pe-
culiar Prieſt and Teraphim, and ſhape the
Model of his Religion as the Genius of his
fancy and opinions ſhould happen to di-
ctate: So that the moſt uncouth extrava-
gancies and conceits might have been as
acceptable an oblation and method for
his venerations, as any could be contriv'd
moſt excellent and worthy for ſo infinite
a Beeing; and all the individuals of his
kind might have differ'd and contra-
dicted as much in the manner of be-
ing Holy, and how to Reverence him,
as in their ſeveral notions and ſenti-
ments of Myſteries and Rites, which are
not of leſs immenſe variety and diſcor-
dance, than, what in every one is moſt
unlike

unlike to all of his Neighbours, their faces. But that had been really all one as not to have bound him by any Laws or Duty at all; but granted him the unreſtrained freedom of rambling among all things, whether good or bad, if the caſe can admit of ſuch a diſtinction, without ever ſtumbling upon that whoſe unlawfulneſs might require the warrineſs and advertency of his ſteps: ſince the moſt forcible impulſe of the unwieldieſt Luſt and Senſuality could never have prompted him to a baſeneſs ſo much *ſo*, or hurried him head-long upon ſuch loathſome groſs abominations, but what he might have hallowed and Baptiz'd by the name of his Devotions, and conſecrated by the innocent meritorious Titles of Piety and Zeal; the very Bacchanals, and moſt barbarous inhumanities, being abundantly reconcil'd, even to the repute and approbation, and much more *humours* of men, when once they were enhanc'd and ennobled by the Metamorphoſis that made them Religion and a honouring of the gods: And ſo in that *Hypotheſis* there could have nothing

nothing been thought upon more laudable and becoming, for the Worship of never so perfect an Essence and Divinity.

Nay moreover, not to have afforded him such Means to square and measure his allegiance and performances by, would have render'd the punishing of him for the Infringment and Prevarication of any *particular* Obligation, and consequently of the *whole* of that duty unto which his Maker had ty'd him, *impossible*, because *unjust*; not to speak of the utmost extent of the Power and Dominion Almighty GOD has over his Creatures: when the *invincible ignorance*, would have fully excus'd the flatest breach and violation of it. All which evidently would infer that Man is not oblig'd to any Religious behaviour towards the Author of his beeing; since it does so, 'that there is no Law unto which That ought to be conformed, nor yet any consequents of one to enforce and secure it; an Obligation without a Law, and *these*, being equally ridiculous and unaccountable. And so it wholly destroys what was lately shown in the fore-going

Section,

Section, concerning the design for which Man was created.

2. Therefore it was that *Adam* in the state of Innocence was only bound to what he was inclin'd by the Dictamen and Principles of his own Reason ( with whose very beeing and constitution the true notions and apprehensions of a Deity, and that purest Systeme of the Laws of Nature, were inseparably blended and interwoven ); and not to venture upon that forbidden Tree, which was *so very expressly* interdicted, that even *Eve*, though to gratifie her prurient curiosity, she could dissemble the hazard of relishing that inviting Fruit when the sutlest of Beasts assaulted her with the tentation, could not pretend the fainteſt umbrage of a scruple, whether it was prohibited or not; but on the contrary, by too great a niceness, lookt on that as unlawful, even so much as to be *toucht*, which was only so to be *eaten*. And so when fond and credulous Man had yielded unto the blushing ( because treacherous ) allurements of those more mortiferous, than lusciously

painted Apples, and thereby forfeited his Paradiſe and his Innocence too; and a neceſſity was introduc'd, either for him to ſuffer the wages of his tranſgreſſion, and eternally become the wretched prey of Sin and Death, or elſe for illimited Mercy to interpoſe in his behalf, and procure an expedient by which to reſcue him from the cruel Jaws of *both*, and make him again *meet to be partaker of the inheritance of the Saints in light*: GOD whoſe clemency acknowledges no boundiaries, having liſtned to the latter, to re-admit him unto his former favour, and confer upon him a new poſſibility of enjoying himſelf; did ſurely condeſcend alſo to reveal unto him thoſe Conditions of that gracious Compact whereunto now he had ſtoop'd, which were indiſpenſably to be performed by him, if he would not make a ſecond Ship-wrack of the vaſteſt happineſs he was ſo reſolutely purſued with. And indeed ſince the Articles of this Covenant he a-freſh entered into with him, were ſo far above the reach of, not only a lapſed Intellect, but the ſublimeſt of

thoſe Spirits which are moſt intimatly converſant with the hidden things of their Maker, that even Cherubs *deſir'd to pry into them*; how ſadly had that compaſſion, which pitied the wretched eſtate poor inconſiderate Man had plung'd himſelf into, ſupplanted and defeated it ſelf, had it denyed him the Keyes which could only open thoſe Doors, thorow which he was of neceſſity to paſs, before the felicity tendered unto him could be arrived at? Aſſuredly to have rais'd in him the hopes of being reſtor'd to his primæve capacity of bliſs, and to have made the terms of that redintegrated eſtate ſo immenſely beyond the moſt ſoaring flight of his briskſieſt winged powers, and then to have grudg'd him the acceſſary elevating pinions which could only mount him aloft to the happy fruition, had been in ſtead of any courteſie or vouchſafement, a tantalizing ſo much more cruel than that the Poets fabled, by how much the eternal poſſeſſion of God in glory is more raviſhing and allicient, than were thoſe long'd for refreſhments which ſurrounded the

ſmacking lips of *Pelops's* Father; or at leaſt a mockery equal, if not infinitely beyond that, which would promiſe him the Scepter of the Univerſe whoſe Arithmetick ſhould exactly number thoſe twinckling Stars that beſpangle a Winters Night.

## Section III.

1. CONSEQUENTLY to all which the Scripture tells us how that God had no ſooner ſmil'd again upon repenting *Adam*, but he gave him *ſufficient* Notice of that Meſſiah, *that Seed of the Woman that ſhould bruiſe the Serpents head*, upon whoſe account his Reconciliation with him was wrought, and by Faith in whom he could only be capable to taſte the benefite and advantage of it. And certainly, beſides the Law of Nature, ſo indelibly character'd upon his Soul, that nothing but the entire diſſolution of the whole frame could totally efface or raze it thence; and therefore, tho much dimm'd and blotted by the fall, yet ſtill conſpicuous and legible enough even in that dusky

dusky twilight whereunto his Reason had now declin'd: besides this, I say, he further injoyn'd him some *positive* Observances, and Ceremonies of Devotion, which might carry an *especial regard*, and be *peculiarly adapted* unto that late Agreement, and new Creed concerning a Redeemer; and whereby his Religion might be discriminated from what the weak glimmerings of shattered Nature could hit on light upon. Which is manifest from that early Victime which his Son *Abel* offered up, no doubt to propitiate and attone Heaven for his sins; and which he could only have learned from his Father, and he from God, by some *positive* Institution. Since 'tis not supposable that ever any of them durst have presum'd to endeavour the pacifying an offended and angry Divinity with bloudy expiations, if himself had not first instructed them how he could be most acceptably accosted and appeas'd.

2. Nay since we find that afterwards (in the *Mosaical* Dispensation at least) he did appoint such immolations to represent that great Sacrifice which his own Son was

to offer up of himself in the stead of lapsed Mankind, and by vertue of their *Typical respect* unto It, to be the only outward means of procuring his pardon for whatever offences had provockt him to wrath and indignation; There lies a force upon us to conclude, that, as immediatly after he had again *lifted up the light of his loving countenance* upon *Adam*, he imparted to him the Gospel and glad tidings of his own consubstantial and eternally begotten Son, who should retaliat that foil he had got from the Serpent to the highest *proportion*, by *being born of a Woman*, and taking that Nature upon him which it had so successfully assaulted, that even with humane feet he might kick and trample it down again to that lowest Hell whence it had escap'd: So he did also inform him of that bloudy Propitiation to be made by his cruel death, for the washing away that ugly stain of guilt which so miserably he had contracted by sin, and averting that curse and fury which infinite Justice had most dreadfully thunder'd out upon him, if not stopt by the powerful

merit

merit of ſuch a Satisfaction; And did therefore command him to make attonement for his Soul with thoſe *bloudy* oblations, which *both* receiv'd the moſt prevailing value from their *myſtical union* with the precious bloud of the holy *Lamb of God ſlain from the foundation of the world*, and alſo impreſt the deepeſt ſenſe of that ſtupendious love and mercy, which was to bring GOD himſelf thus, for the tranſgreſſions of his own Creatures, to be torn and mangled by ſuch wicked hands as durſt be embrued with his infinitely ſacred gore; that very compaſſion which could not be detain'd from the poor beaſt when under the ſlaughtering knife, ſerving proportionably to redouble the horrour of that ſaddeſt Tragedy, which even the Author and fountain of Life was without all compaſſion to endure. For by all the rules of argument we cannot but infer, that if ever theſe Sacrifices were ordain'd by GOD upon ſuch a myſterious deſign, as no Humane Reaſon could be able to have fal'n upon, ſuch as was now mentioned, of typifying that great Oblation whereby

the

the Messiah was to offer up himself for the sins of the World, and of being till *then* the great and only means of expiation upon that account; then surely they were never at all of any other Invention and contrivance but his alone: And especially when otherwise it is not within the verge of the most ingenious fancy to give any tollerable ground from which they could have taken birth; but on the contrary, the generous and tender nature of reasonable Beeings seems to shrink and contract it self at the very apprehension of acting the least violence upon the life of any thing, that were but so much akin to it, as to breath the same common air which refreshes its own lungs; and far less could it imagine that such wanton cruelties could be any suitable method for procuring that mercy in its own behalf, which in that of another (not so much inferiour to it, as it was to its Maker) it had so hugely invaded; or that the infinite GOD could relish any pleasure in those savage butcheries from which its reluctant self was so very much averse,

averſe, and whoſe unprovocked ſeverity it could not but greatly deteſt and abhor. And therefore had not GOD expreſsly enjoyn'd ſuch expiations unto *Adam* and his Poſterity, they could not juſtly have expected any other return to the devoteſt of them they could venture upon, than that in *Iſaiah*, (chap. 1. verſ. 11. to 15.) *To what purpoſe is the multitude of your ſacrifices to me? I delight not in the bloud of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats; bring no more vain oblations, which are an abomination unto me: when ye ſpread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of bloud.* It was enough then to intimate unto us that *Abel*'s Offering was a peice of *poſitive* Worſhip, to tell us that GOD did teſtifie his reſpect unto it; eſpecially in ſo compendious an Hiſtory of ſuch ancient Tranſactions: it being highly rational to think he had never accepted any thing ſo unproper in it ſelf, and ſo unworthy of him, if it had not for ſuch excellent reaſons, as thoſe above expreſs'd, been elevated from being

being *either*, by his own appointment and prescription. And so neither *Adam*, nor his Children were left to their own choice, or arbitrary inventions, how to acquit themselves unto that GOD, who more than once had dealt so bountifully and graciously with them.

## SECTION IV.

1. THAT divine Book does also inform us how that after the Fall had knock'd off those chains which restrain'd the Sensitive and animal Part within its due boundiaries and confines, it so broke loose (in the most of men) upon the Supream and Spiritual, as by the vehemency of its voluptuous inclinations to divert it from any other project or design, but how to satisfie its highest luxuries and revels, and swill the beast with all the wantonest inordinacies corruption it self could wallow into; till at last the poor debauch'd Soul forgot it was made for any more noble or generous purpose, than thus to drudge and pimp unto its own usurping slave, and became

became so far unmindful of its duty and interest with its God (whom it could never have reflected upon without more defecated and refin'd thoughts than those it was habituated unto), as never once to mind there was a GOD at all, except such as was of its own creating, and could best serve the turn of those course and fulsome pleasures whereinto it was most filthily plung'd and immerst. Yet notwithstanding there always remain'd of those whom the vigorous sense of their Makers goodness, and the infinit engagements they ow'd unto him, did preserve from being worsted by the enticements and propensions of the Flesh, but with a proportionable fortitude to the dignity of the quarrel, maintain'd the power and soveraignty of their better and more sublime selves, and who therefore by a perpetual succession did transmit and hand down the Knowledg and Will of their Creator, and especially what belong'd to that promised *Seed of the Woman*, even from their great Grand-Sire *Adam*, unto the days of that solemn Prophet of a new Oeconomie and

Dispensation,

Dispensation, *Moses*. And such was that uninterrupted Tradition that it needed not pass through many Mouths, tho it did Years; since by clear computation *Adam* might have converst with *Noah*, and his Son *Sem* with *Abraham*, from whom to *Moses* there went no such long tract of Time, but that what He informed his Posterity, might by an *easie* and *sure* conveyance have arrived at him.

5. But besides *that*, GOD was continually showing and revealing himself to the several Patriarchs of that Holy Line, either by Dreams and Visions, or even Sensible Appearances and other extraordinary ways; that he might both confirm and settle them the more strongly in the Principles and Faith of their Religion, and also preserve it from being deprav'd or adulterated by the circumambient viciousnes of a degenerate and apostate World, which still was giving it the shock on all hands. So that all this while he was not wanting to the World in the *sufficient* discovery of that Saviour which he was to send to *redeem* and *die* for it;

or

or in the full promulgation of those Laws and Statutes by which he would have it ordered and governed: and none did perish but such, as were therefore de-depriv'd, no less justly of an *excuse*, than of the felicity they wittingly neglected.

## Section V.

1. BUT then God thought it time to usher in the Messiah into the World with such evident Types and Predictions, both of his Person, and his Office, as could be no sooner accomplisht by any, but they behov'd palpably to attest him to be the Holy One sent from above: that so such an astonishing appearance, as that of a God cloath'd with humane Flesh, might not be attended with any such confounding surprise, as even the most stupendious prodigies Omnipotence it self could produce to vouch it, would hardly repair; and also that by the signal completion of those expres and direct Propheſies, foretold so long before, and by the most exact *answering*

of

of the *end* and *tendency*, and full *evacuation* of thoſe many Rites and Prefigurations, the infidelity of ſuch Miſcreants, as durſt deny his Miſſion, might be rendered as *obſtinate* and *pretenceleſs*, as it would certainly be *damnable* and *fatal*. Wherefore having ſworn unto *Abraham* (who had given him ſuch a profound ſpecimen of his Faith and Obedience as ſeem'd even almoſt meritorioully to claim his being elected to be the *Father of the faithful*) that the *Meſſiah* ſhould proceed out of his loins, and ſo *all the nations of the earth be bleſſed in his ſeed*; and that therefore he ſhould make his Poſterity his own peculiar People, and place them in a rich and pleaſant Country of his own *chooſing* and *conqueſt*, there to live under the immediate ſuperintendence of himſelf while that promiſed Redeemer ſhould ariſe from out among his Brethren; having thus engag'd himſelf to *Abraham*, I ſay, He now makes good his promiſe, and that in ſuch a manner as did irretragably betoken that it was He indeed that did it. He had ſuffered his Off-ſpring to ſojourn in a

ſtrange

ſtrange Land, and fall under the heavieſt yoke of Bondage that cruel Tyranny could lay on; not only that his Power, and Love to them might be the more highly magnified in the triumphant carrying of them out again thence, but alſo that the very Diſpenſations of his *temporal*, might pattern and exhibite thoſe of his *ſpiritual* Providence toward them; and the ſervitude of *Egypt*, with their reſcue from it, and ſettlement in the Typical *Canaan* by as Typical a *Joſhua*, might *reſemble* and *ſignifie* the ſlavery of Sin, and the being freed from its Thraldom, and the glorious entrance into the Heavenly *Canaan* that is above by the introduction of the Holy Jeſus. But, after they had multiplied into a great and populous Nation, having given Commiſſion to his Servant *Moſes* to procure their freedom and liberty, and to rule and command over them; and having furniſht him with the very loan of his whole Omnipotence almoſt, both to aſſert and execute that Warrand; He did at laſt by many ſevere Plagues and Judgements, ſuch as vyed *Rigour* and *Prodigie*

*digit* together, even extort them from their never so reluctant Oppressours; and under the conduct of their new Leader, brought them out of *Egypt* unto the Wilderness, thorow which they behov'd to pass before they could come at their promised Inheritance, and that with such a high Arm and mighty Hand, as made the whole earth to tremble, and at once enfranchized them, and destroyed their enemies too.

2. And they having thorow as many *miracles* as *difficulties* arriv'd at the foot of Mount *Sinai*, He did, from the top thereof, impart and promulgate unto them a new Scheme of Religion and Worship with such pompous Schenes of Majesty and terrour, even to such formidable Solemnity and Magnificence, as poor quakeing Mortals were unable to bear, and as could not but beget the highest reverence and veneration for what was backt with so dreadful a Sanction to enforce and recommend it. And the great Design at which drove all his transactions with the sons of men, being still to *bring* and *re-*

*concile*

*concile* them unto himself only through the mediation of his own well-beloved Son *in whom alluanerly he could be well pleas'd:* he was so far from swerving, or in the least declining from it in the delivery of that Law, as that (excepting the Moral Law, which for the most part was only a *new positive authority*, superadded to some of the most material obligations of *that* of Nature) it was equally uncapable of any other *signification* but what referr'd it unto the *Messiah* to come, as it manifestly lookt and pointed to him; being only but a *School master to bring them to Christ, that they might be justified by Faith*, as St. *Paul* in his Epistle to the *Galatians* (*ch.* 3.) most inspir'dly makes it out; and all its Rites and Ceremonies being nothing but Symbolical Representments and *Patterns of heavenly things, and shadows of good things to come*, as is most evidently shown by the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, *ch.* 8. 9, 10. So that the same Author (*ch.* 4. *ver.* 2.) takes it for granted that the Gospel was Preacht, even then unto the Jews, as well as it was afterwards unto the Christi-

ans; when he draws an Argument from the one to the other: And so the whole Systeme and Æconomie of that Ministration did *but only* prefigure and *sensibly foretell* the appearance of him for whom it was appointed as an Harbinger and Forerunner.

3. And as it was thus solemnly promulgate, so was it most *punctually* and *expresly* delivered in all its Precepts and several Constitutions, that none who had but eyes and ears could be to seek for what they were to do in the observing of them; the minutest circumstance and iotta of their duty being condescended upon with such particular exactness, as left no room for doubts and scruples to call it in question; and the very smallest Pin of their Tabernacle being even nicely set down in that so wonderfully compleat Model. And in case any *hard controversies* should arise among them, GOD erected a Supreme and unappealable Judicatory, by whose sentence they might be determined, *and according to which they were to do, so as not to decline therefrom* in an Ace, *either to the right*

*right or left hand: and he that durſt act preſumptuouſly, and not hearken to the Prieſt (that ſtood to miniſter before the Lord), or unto the Judge, was ſtraight to be put to death*; Deut. ch. 17. ver. 8. to 12. And as if all this had not provided ſufficiently enough for the reſolution of their doubts and perplexities, and communicating to them the mind of Heaven in all the various emergencies and encumbrances that might befall them; GOD did further beſtow on them a conſtant and infallible Oracle, to which in all their moſt important and concerning queries and difficulties they might reſort, and from whoſe Reſponſes receive full and undiſputable ſatisfaction; the Judgement of *Urim* and *Thummim*; *Exod. ch.* 28. *ver.* 30. and *Numb. ch.* 27. *ver.* 21. And tho now there be few things of more puzzling intricacy in the Scripture, than to determine what that *Urim* and *Thummim* was, and in what manner it gave its anſwers; yet that it was, and that it moſt diſtinctly ſignified the will of God in all its deciſions, were quite infidelity to queſtion.

4. And as that Law was thus clearly published to the first eye and ear-witnesses and receivers of it, so that it might be the more securely deriv'd to Posterity, and conveyed uncorrupt through all the following Generations and Ages, it was by the great Minister of it consign'd to *writing, and deliver'd unto the Priests, and unto all the Elders of Israel, to be read at the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of Release, before all Israel in their hearing, that their children and the strangers within their gates might hear and learn to fear the Lord their God: and the Book thereof was put in the side of the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord God, that it might be there for a witness against them*; Deut. ch. 31. ver. 9. to 12. and 26. And so *the Commandment was not hidden from them, neither was it far off, but the word was very nigh them, in their mouth, and in their heart, that they might do it*; ch. 30. ver. 11. to 14. Nay every one was to *teach it diligently unto his children, and make it the constant subject of his discourse, whether sitting in his house, or walking by the way, or*

*or when he lay down, or rose up; and was to bind it for a sign upon his hand, and as frontlets between his eyes, and to write it upon the posts of his house, and his gates:* ch. 6. ver. 7, 8, 9. What could have been contriv'd more effectual and proper for conveying of it unto Posterity, than all this?

## Section VI.

1. BUT yet in the Institution of this Law, the infinite goodness of God prevail'd with him to comply something with the unmalleable *hardness of that peoples heart* (*Matth. ch.* 19. *ver.* 8.). And therefore he did not only indulge them a Ceremonial Religion overspread with Types and Rites, they being so fondly addicted to these out of imitation of the Heathen customs, as that nothing almost could wean or turn their inclinations from them; and so did treat them like Children, and teach them the loftiest Mysteries of their Salvation with gawdy and little Poppet-like things which could af-

fect their senses, *the weak and beggerly elements of this world* (*Galat. ch.* 4. *ver.* 3, 9.): but also, because of their being so miserably entangled with almost insatiable lustings after the Onions and Flesh-pots of *Egypt*, he did allure and encourage them unto the observance of his Precepts and Statutes with the hugely *outvying* affluence of a Land flowing with Milk and Honey, and all the most exquisite and ravishing blessings and comforts that this present transitory life could desire. And such was the untoward and disingenuous temper of most of their Race as wildly to pervert that so merciful condescention from its principal and main design, by making it serve to justle out and over-run the more *essential* and *important*, and so more *binding* obligation *of the weightier matters of the Law*, those universal and native Dictates of sober and unforced Reason; as if the sensible Magnificence and Splendor of those Ritual & External performances had been evidence enough that their Author was mostly concerned in them, and that the flagrant smoak of Incense, and

reeking bloud of Goats did send up a more acceptable Savour into his Noſtrils, than could the warmeſt Piety and Devotion that did only flame within the ſecret and unſeen retirements of an immaterial Soul. Yea, they took occaſion from it ſo to clog and load their hopes and expectations with the heavy lumpiſh multitude of thoſe expreſs temporal promiſes, as to keep them ſtill a gruntling upon that duller level upon which earthly Mortals love only to crawl, from winging it aloft to thoſe more ſpiritual and ſublimated joys which could only animate and engage to a proportionable Sanctity and Vertue. Such was their doating proneneſs to Superſtition and Senſuality, as to ſuffer their thoughts to be hampered and born down, as well with the viſible ſolemnity and pomp of thoſe outward Ceremonies, from looking over them unto the Truth and Subſtance at which they chiefly glanc'd; as with the grateful and fondeſt pleaſures of their adored *Canaan*, from lifting up an eye above its Mountains unto thoſe heavenly Regions of pureſt

Glory,

Glory, of which it was but the pledge and earnest.

2. Wherefore besides these fainter Adumbrations and Figures, they had a *more sure word of prophecy:* God having daily raised up some extraordinary and inspir'd Persons, both to preach unto them the true purport and notion of all that external and pompous Ministration, and so make it answer its *primary* and *spiritual* Intendment, of setting forward their look unto the final and design'd accomplishment of it, the Messiah; and also to foretell his coming with such pat and evident Prophesies of him, as could not let them be innocently ignorant of it, neither *before*, nor *after* it: that dawn still growing clearer and clearer the nearer this Sun of Righteousness was to rise in our World. And indeed they drew the livelyest strokes and lineaments of his Pourtracture with such palpable resemblance, that the Evangelists themselves needed (as they ordinarly did) but transcribe from them to compile its History. So that justly might St. *Peter* (*Acts* chap. 10.

10. ver. 43.) say, *To him give all the Prophets witness*; and himself (*Luke* chap. 24. verſ. 27.) *beginning at* Moſes, *and all the Prophets expound in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.* And therefore, as 'tis hard to determine whether it be more of perverſeneſs or infatuation that has kept off the progeny of that People from embracing him for their Meſſiah, in whom theſe many eminent and remarkable accompliſhments of that whole cloud of Predictions, did even to a wonder moſt unanimouſly conſpire; and that tho he had not been furniſhed with any other Credentials to atteſt him: ſo it is certain that whatever has been the cauſe of that, yet as they now *do*, ſo they always *did* look for a Meſſiah to come; however they might have miſtaken in their fancies and opinions about him.

3. And not only did they foretell his Perſon, but in a manner foreſtall part of his Office too; by retreiving the dignity and reputation of the Moral Law, the moſt vital and indiſpenſable piece of their duty tho never ſo much Jews, when either

ther by their false glosses and interpretations they had rob'd it of its greatest power and effect, and deprav'd and warped it unto their base and evil lives; or had postpon'd it unto those, tho more *glittering*, yet as much more *unsignificant* Usages and Rites, wherein they were so infinitely nice and plac'd the main of their Religion, and so did notice it no more but as a thing for which they might easily compensate GOD, in *commuting* by *these* for *those* other most *genuine* and *essential* prescriptions of his Will. This is to be seen throughout all their Writings; and especially in, *Psal.* 40. ver. 6. to 10. *Psal.* 50. ver. 8. to 23. *Psal.* 51. ver. 16, 17. *Isa.* chap. 1. ver. 11. to 24. *Jer.* chap. 7. ver. 8. to 11. and 21. to 26. *Hos.* chap. 6. ver. 5, 6. *Mic.* chap. 6. ver. 6, 7, 8.

4. And no doubt having made such plain and irrefragable discoveries of the Messiah unto them, and so zealously exhorted them to the practice of that inward Justice and Honesty, which to illustrate and teach was to be much of his errand to this lower World; they gave them

them also such glimpses and manifestations of that future happiness they were to attain through his mediation, and as the most congruous reward for their blameless souls, as, how-ever dark and obscure, were nevertheless *sufficiently* perspicuous to raise their aims at nobler fruitions, than what the prosperity of a temporal *Canaan* could allow; and to enforce the pursuit of such adapting and refin'd Vertues as might ebellish and dispose them for the possession of those more defecated and purest Raptures and Transports; that *fullness of joy in the presence of God, and those pleasures that are at his right hand for evermore*, to which *David* was no stranger, *Psal.* 16. ver. 11. nor yet many of the Prophets, as might at large be shewed: the very Resurrection, and final Judgement, and last Glory of the Saints, being expresst by *Daniel* (*chap.* 13. *ver.* 2, 3.) in the same individual words almost wherewith afterwards St. *Matthew* (chap. 25. ver. 46. and chap. 12. ver. 43.) and St. *John* (chap. 5. ver. 29.) describ'd them. Hence St. *Peter* (Epist. 1. chap. 1.

ver.

ver. 9, 10, &c.) speaking of that salvation of Souls, which is the end of the Christian Faith, says, *Of which salvation the Prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you*; (the Jews to wit) *searching what, or what manner of time the spirit of Christ which was in them did signifie, when it testified before hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow; Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves* (supposing that it was clearly enough revealed to them) *but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you.* 'Tis true our Saviour is said to have *brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel*, 2 Tim. 1. 10. But certainly that must be understood, not of an *entire relucency*, but only of a *greater degree* of that light: otherwise none before him had ever beheld even the faintest gleam or ray of its lustre; which is unquestionably false. And truly, no reasonable account could have been given by any of the successions of the *Israelites* after once they were masters of

their

their Darling *Canaan* ( while a little before the appearance of the Messiah ) for what they did look for his coming, if it was not to be enstated into some more blessed enjoyments than those they were even tumbling among : since they were already possest of all the comforts that Earth could afford them, and could propose nothing more from him, than what they could be crouded with in the plentiful reign of a far less than he, a *Solomon*. Indeed when the *Roman* Eagle was erected over the great Gate of the Temple, and not only themselves, but their Religion also, was enslaved by the sacrilegious and insulting force of a Forraign Power, and so they were overwhelm'd with all the Calamities a poor miserable Nation could be crusht with ; 'twas no great wonder that, considering the make and frame of their humour, they should have perpetually been a plodding how to liberate themselves from such a grievous Subjection, and that, dispairing of it as impreſtable to any thing less than some such miraculous Deliverance as their Nation had

wont

went to be accustomed unto, and of which there was then no other probability but what could be gathered from the coming of the Messiah, which not a few presages made them hope was near at hand; it was no wonder, I say, they should therefore have then catcht at some favourable Scriptures accommodated to their more gross affections, wherewith to flatter themselves he was hasting to *restore the Kingdom again to Israel*; and so that even his own Disciples, prepossest with the vulgar (and so course) expectations of his Terrene Glory, should after all their converse with him, and his very Resurrection too, have question'd him whether or not he was then to do *so*, and never be resolv'd before the descent of the Holy Ghost, and his brightest Irradiations shone a more Heavenly Light upon their elevated understandings. But that was only to be imputed to the feculency and mixture of their muddy inclinations, and the bad circumstances whereinto they were stated; and not to the dispensation of

GOD,

GOD, which had condescended to all that was Reason, or Passion, or even Sense within them. Neither did it hinder but that those of a more calcin'd and purified disposition might have had a further Prospect than all the delicious and inveigling satisfactions of any Sublunary and Material Region; and with just and devout *Simeon* (Luk: ch: 8: ver: 25:) *waited for the true consolation of Israel*: Nay, and with him (*ver:* 29: to 32.) been ready and content even to bid an eternal adieu to all the sweetest pleasures of this transient World upon the very first sight of his Salvation; which therefore could be nothing to be enjoy'd on this side the Grave. An evidence of this was also *Zacharias* his Song; *Luke ch:* 1: *ver:* 68: to 79. Altho then all the promises that were *directly* annext to that Legal Covenant whereinto God entered with that People at Mount *Sinai*, were but *temporal*; and such as only concern'd their outward prosperity and comfort; yet that Law unto which they were engag'd, not being the *substance* and *main* of their duty, but only

ly an Appendage to it, and an Umbrage of the Meſſiah, and thoſe great Bleſſings and Priviledges which were to attend in his Retinue (as was ſhown, *Sect.* 5.) ſo alſo were theſe Promiſes, not the *higheſt* and chief encouragements of their obedience, but *peculiarly correſpondent* to their own Ceremonial Inſtitution, and ſo only Pledges and Shadows of *theſe* other, as much more tranſcendent and raviſhing than *they*, as is the Law *theſe* reward, more noble and accompliſhing than That *they* belong'd to.

5. But that peoples ſtubborn and almoſt inflexible nature could not be eaſily prevail'd upon with thoſe mild and ſofter enticements, nor their rugged Complexion readily ſmooth'd into Vertue and true Holineſs by the moſt ſparkling propoſals that related only to the enjoyments of *another* life, and were not to be taſted in *this*, ſave at view and by Landskip. And ſo the generality of them, providing they could but keep their *bodies* as well as their *deſires* under the ſhadow of their own Vines and Fig-trees, would neither court

nor

nor thank any bounty for more that would but ensure them of so much. And thus, notwithstanding all the vastest allurements of any future bliss, they would never refrain the pursuit of those lusts and carnalities which would *only* indispose them for its *spiritual* and *invisible* fruitions; but would whet and inflame them still the more for *those* which their grosser Senses could be capable to perceive. Therefore, that no method might be left unessayed how they could be wrought upon, and all that was even but sensible about them might be assaulted with proportionable operatives and movements; God in his infinite Mercy was pleas'd to tell them what his Justice would do, if they did frustrate the gentler strains of his Goodness, and incurr'd its vengeance and indignation; that so he might try if their Fears would drive them to that obedience, which they were not so ingenuous as out of *hope* to perform. By his Prophets then he discovered unto them that *Tophet ordained of old, the Pile whereof is Fire and much Wood, and the breath of the*

*Lord, like a ſtream of Brimſtone, doth kindle it (Iſai. ch. 30. ver. 33.)*: thus repreſenting unto them that intollerably dreadful place which the workers of iniquity muſt reſolve to be thrown head-long into, and where they are perpetually to be prey'd upon by the ſcorching flames of infinite wrath and revenge. And at this rate he pos'd the verieſt deſperate and daring ſinner, whether or not his doating love to the moſt charming and guſtful delights of wickedneſs, could furniſh him with courage enough to face and out-brave Damnation, with a, *Who among us ſhall dwell with devouring fire? Who among us ſhall dwell with everlaſting burnings?* (*Iſai. ch. 33. ver. 14.*) Theſe diſmal burnings whoſe neither *degree* nor *duration* admits of any other limits than *thoſe* wherewith Immenſity it ſelf is confin'd: and which therefore no gloſs could make belong to any other Furnace than that of the bottomleſs Pit.

## Section VII.

1. THUS we see how much profuse and liberal Heaven was of its Manifestations unto that people, and that it mist in nothing which could any wise conduce to point them out the road towards it self. So that well might God have argu'd the case with them as he did in *Isaiah ch.* 5. *ver.* 1. to 8. *What could have been done more to my Vineyard, that I have not done in it?* it being but a very modest expostulation after he had enumerated those many even prodigalities of his care, in *fencing it, and gathering out the stones thereof, and planting it with the choisest Vine, and building a Tower in the midst of it, and also making a Wine-press therein:* All which were but so many Parables and Allegories of what we have been discoursing. And how oft does he upbraid them with it by *Jeremiah* alone? Still telling them, when they hardned their neck, that *since the day that their fathers came forth out of Egypt unto that day,*

(which was toward the end of their dispensation) *he had even sent unto them all his servants the Prophets, daily rising up early, and sending them*: *ch*: 7: *ver*: 25: *ch*: 25: *ver*: 4. *ch*: 29: *ver*: 19: and *ch*: 32: *ver*: 33. So that there is nothing more evident than that, during that Period of the Church, there was most abundant revelation of the Will of GOD; having *shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what did the Lord require of thee* (*Micah, ch*: 6: *ver*: 8.): Nay, that there was knowledge enough even of the Messiah (*Joh*: *ch*: 5: *ver*: 39.), the whom to know was no less *then*, than *yet is*, life eternal.

2. And what need then of the Messiah, if all that belong'd to Life and Salvation was already made manifest to the World? Yes sure, the need of him was as great as ever. For the Jewish Manifestation being but in order to his appearance, it behov'd *essentially* to require that he should come, unless it self were to be made a Cheat and Imposture. And can it be imagin'd that a *sufficient* knowledge of his coming, and of the design of it, should have been sufficient

ficient too to *evacuate* both? No certainly; but on the contrary, the more *clearly* he was known to be coming, the more *inexcusably* was he *engag'd* not to *disappoint* and *belye* that knowledge. Indeed if the Levitical Priesthood (*under which the people received the Law*) had not had an eye to that great High Priest of our Profession, Christ Jesus, and so had not deriv'd all its perfection meerly from its Typical Relation unto him, there had been no *further need that another Priest should arise after the order of Melchisedeck, and not after the order of Aaron*; as the Apostle excellently well disputes it, *Heb. ch: 7. ver:* 11. But then, the sins of fallen Mankind having justly expos'd them to eternal wrath and condemnation, and so it having wholly surpast all within its own power and deservings (especially in that its guilty condition), to repair and attone them; GOD, in his new tender of Salvation, had not exacted for them any full and condignly meritorious satisfaction unto that Justice which they had so vastly enrag'd and provocked; but had

out of his meer absolute Soveraignty and Dominion graciously vouchsaf'd his Pardon and Indemnity upon such *acknowledgements* and *formalities of Expiation*, as went not beyond the Capacity of the Offender himself, even in his miserable and sinful estate, to *make* and *perform*. But, besides that this had been to suppress that Glory wherewith every one of the Divine Attributes shone so refulgently in the Mystery of our Redemption, and so had wholly defeated that design for which both We and the World we do inhabite, were first brought from our ancient nothing, *all things being for him*, Heb. 2. 10. His infinitely impartial Justice could not let it thus slip over; neither could any thing bribe it to the least Relaxation of its fatal Sentence, and that doom it had past; either the Soul that sin'd must die (rather than which infinite Mercy would die it self), or else such another in its stead, as, by taking its *guilt* upon it, might fully undergo its *punishment* too, at least the *equivalent* of its *severest* and most *lasting* inflictions. *Wherefore* (as the Apostle

doth

doth infer, *Heb. ch. 2. ver. 17.*) *in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.* This, this is the great *mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh*; without which there might have perhaps been Philosophie enough, or whimsical Superstition in the World; but never any thing worthy the very name of Religion. Thus it was that the most perspicuous notice which could have been had of that highest concernment to Mankind, was so far from superseding the compleatest *execution* of it, that, as *some* was alwayes indispensably necessary, so the *fuller* it was, the *more infallibly* it inferr'd it.

## Section VIII.

1. YET none is to apprehend that the Jewish Dispensation went beyond the capacity of that condition whereinto they were stated, and did not correspond to that of a people that liv'd but

but in the expectation of their Redeemer to come. No, no. Their Holy of Holies was but ſtill within the Vail: and their very Souls were little leſs ſtrangers to that equally *Myſtical* and *Sacred* place, than were their ſeldom or never entering Bodies. Nay *Moſes*'s Vail was ſo muffl'd over their eyes, that they could not *with open face, behold as in a Glaſs the glory of the Lord*; but only ſee it in the wann and fainter light of thoſe Shadows and Predictions that peept in thorow the dangling Fringes which hung at its Borders; and ſo at beſt have but notions of it as wandring and confus'd, as the *medium* thorow which they were convey'd was dimm and obſcure. But firſt, this touches not any thing that was ſaid about their knowledge of the Moral Law. And however the Revelations of the Meſſiah had been envelopt and roll'd up in the moſt myſterious and ænigmatical inſinuations; yet they might have ſufficiently learn'd That from the ſupervenient Sanction wherewith GOD authoriz'd it anew, and thoſe *explanatory* admonitions and exhortations

hortations wherewith the Prophets were ſtill *refining* and *enforcing* it; beſides what Nature had irreſiſtably ſuggeſted: all that He was to do as to that, being only to remove that rubbiſh of ſiniſtruous conſtructions wherewith wicked men might have almoſt ſmother'd it, and to make it appear again in its primitive and genuine Meaning and Luſtre. Then ſecondly, let it be that the true *intent* and *ſignificancy* of their Temple-miniſtration, and whole Ceremonial Law, was as little obvious and plain, as the Myſteries they repreſented were lofty and abſtruſe; yet every the leaſt circumſtance and punctilio of them was ſo very expreſsly preſcrib'd, that even That could not have been more dark and perplexing, than This was evident and clear. And ſo their practice at leaſt could never ſtand a hovering for want of *ſufficient* direction and enjoynment.

2. But ſince the Meſſiah was the Salt which ſeaſoned all their Sacrifices, and the Altar which ſanctified their Gifts, unleſs they had *as* ſufficiently known him too, all their Moral and Ceremonial performances

formances could not have advantag'd them any thing at all. And therefore, altho all the Types and Prophecies, which inform'd them of his coming, should not have particularly condescended to describe the several Features and Traits of his Countenance, or give any minut account of what was afterwards known of him, when he *was made manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preacht unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up into glory*: yet if they gave *sufficient* (however *general*) notice that he was to *finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophesie, and to anoint the most holy; and to be Messiah the Prince, and to be cut off, but not for himself, and to confirm the covenant with many, and cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease* (Dan. 9. v. 24. to 27); if, I say, they did but discover so much of him; then certainly their Faith was abundantly provided for, and their very Obedience needed be no more. Yet in the fourth

place,

place, tho they did all that, and much beyond it, as was hinted in §. V. ¶. 2. and §. VI. ¶. 2. and as every body may see throout the whole tenor and scope of the Old Testament, and especially if he compare it with the New: yet if they be not absolutely considered, but with respect to those brightest Manifestations which himself, when come to fulfil whatever they had presag'd or foretold, did make of himself; then they cannot but be said to be as dark and obscure, and as much to wrap up the Revelation of the Messiah in shades and ambiguities, as the beginning of this Section did represent them. *For even that which was made glorious, had no glory in respect, by reason of the glory which excelleth*, 2 Cor. 3. 10. But these last two, that those Types and Prophesies were so much *sufficient*, as to be *enough* for informing the Faith of the *Jews*, and fixing it upon the Messiah that was to come; and yet that *comparatively* to those evidences and notices which were had of him after he was *made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the*

glory

*glory as of the only begotten of the Father,*) *full of grace and truth*, they were but veil'd and myſterious; theſe I ſay, are no ways clashing or inconſiſtent with one another. For ſurely tho we have ſufficient account given us of the Antichriſt, and of the ſecond appearing of our Saviour to judge the World, by ſuch expreſs Predictions as Cavil it ſelf could not elude; yet if we ſhould but draw the parallel betwixt the *actual completion* of them, and themſelves as they *now are awaiting* their *appointed* time; how infinitely ſhould we find the *latter* manifeſtation to ſurpaſs the *former*, and ſo This to be proportionably dark and obſcure in reſpect of That.

3. But laſtly, all the Paſſages in the New Teſtament which ſeem to derogate from the diſpenſation that was under the Old, cannot be ſo much underſtood of the *inequality of the Manifeſtation* that was between them, eſpecially as to what more generally related unto the Meſſiah (tho even that was very conſiderable); as of the *abſolute* and *intrinſick excellency and perfection* of them, *as pertaining to conſcience*;

*ſcience*; the Jewiſh Miniſtration having no aptitude nor tendency of its own meer ſelf *to make the comers thereunto perfect, or take away ſins*, but only the Chriſtian, in which the *bloud of Chriſt, who through the eternal ſpirit, offered himſelf without ſpot to God, doth purge the conſcience from dead works to ſerve the living God*; as the Apoſtle ſtates the caſe all along the 7, 8, 9. and 10. Chapters of the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*. For not only did all the Apoſtles conſtantly prove and confirm even thoſe hiſtorical Deſcriptions which they wrote of his Perſon and Office, by moſt uncontravertible authorities from the Prophets; but they did alſo demonſtrate the neceſſity of his coming out of the very *nature* aud *deſign* of that Ceremonial Conſtitution which prefigur'd him; by making it evident that for its *own ſake* it could have no acceptance with God, tho it had becauſe of its *ſymbolical exhibition* of his ſufferings; and conſequently that it *eſſentially* ſuppos'd his coming, ſince from *that* it borrowed all its value and propriety towards the end for which it was ordain'd.

dain'd. So that ordinarily they Arguing the Affair with the Jews, did it *ad hominem*, and evinc'd what they taught concerning the Bleſſed Jeſus out of their own Law and Prophets: thus far were they from looking upon *either*, as too myſterious and obſcure in the manifeſtation of the Meſſiah. And ſo the *Moſaick* Inſtitution was as much accommodated unto the *temper* and *circumſtances* of that People (eſpecially as comprehending the perpetual Succeſſion of Propheſie which its Founder bequeathed to it) as poſſibly it could have been, without ſomething as powerful as even Predetermination to have irreſiſtably wrought them unto happineſs: But further than *theſe* indeed it never made any great (becauſe needleſs) advance.

## Section IX.

1. *BUT when the fulneſs of time was come, God ſent forth his Son made of a Woman, made under the Law, that we might receive the Adoption of Sons*: and *having*

*ving at ſundry times, and in diverſe manners, ſpoken in time paſt unto the Fathers by the Prophets, did in theſe laſt days ſpeak unto us by his Son.* Then the eternal Word was made viſible, and the Humane Nature aſſum'd unto that unconceivable Dignity of making up one Perſon with the Divine, that ſo the dazzling Rayes of the One being ſhaded by the mortal Fleſh of the Other, he might at once become capable to expreſs that aſtoniſhing love he ſo infinitely bore to Mankind, by offering up himſelf a Sacrifice for its ſins and offences; and alſo by the Sacredneſs of his own *example*, as well, as by the ſublimeſt Purity and Heavenlineſs of his *Doctrine*, both *revive* and *illuſtrate* the native and original Integrity and Extent of that Law, GOD had inſerted and interwoven in the very Texture and Compoſition of the Souls of Men, and ſo elevate the World unto thoſe higher degrees of Vertue and Holineſs, which immediatly do concern its loftieſt perfection and felicity, proportionably as much *here*, as *hereafter*. *Then God raiſed up an horn of*

*Salvation*

*Salvation for us, in the house of his servant* David; *as he spake by the mouth of his holy Prophets which have been since the World began; to give knowledge of Salvation unto his people, by the remission of their sins. Then did the day-spring from on high visite us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet in the way of peace: and to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of the people Israel* (Luk. ch. 1. ver. 69, 70, 77, 78, 79. and ch. 2. ver. 32.). Then *the mystery which had been hid from ages, and from generations, was made manifest to the Saints; to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in us, the hope of glory* (Colos. ch: 2: ver: 26, 27.).

2. And now that Sun of Righteousness having appear'd in our Hemisphere, his purest Beams began to display themselves with triumphant splendor throughout all the corners of its enlightned Expansion; and equally discover the refulgent Source from whence they gloriously flowed,

flowed, and chase away that blackest night of Ignorance and Impiety, which was so miserably hovering over this inferiour World, unto the Hellish Shades of everlasting Darkness and Horrour. For after his spotless Morning (tho clouded with the Swadling-cloaths of weeping Humanity) was introduc'd with the warbling Anthems of those Coelestial Larks, the transported Angels, which sung the most rapturous strains for joy of its arrival; and his humble Fore-noon was sparkled with those earlier resplendencies which could not but shine from his brightest (tho lurking) Divinity; having fully advanc'd to his clearer Meridian, he liberally diffus'd such glancing Rayes of *saving* Light, and such *benign influences* of the most kindly Heat and warmth, over all the Nations of our Domestick Earth, as *groping* and *benum'd* Mortals had never *seen* nor *felt* before, and as was abundantly *sufficient* to *conduct* and *enliven* them in mounting unto that blessed Region whence himself came.

3. And indeed (not to pursue the Metaphor

taphor any further) if he can but be supposed to have been the true Messiah and Saviour of Mankind, he must likewise be acknowledged to have sufficiently discharged himself of that as *important* as *sacred* function; and to have come, not only to make our peace with his Father by the bloudy Sacrifice of his own death; but also to give us full account of the whole mystery of that reconciliation, and of whatever else it was *necessary* or *requisite* for us to know, in order to that eternal felicity which he had acquir'd for us: since both were alike indispensible unto our attaining it; and the infinitest merit of his Cross could have avail'd us nothing, if we had remain'd under that woful ignorance, which had certainly kept us incapable of those holy dispositions whereby we could only be adapted for the fruition of its happy purchase. Assuredly we cannot imagine that he wanted any qualification proper for such a performance; either that himself was not sufficiently instructed in all the Intrigues and Secrets of his Commission, or yet was not endued with Honesty enough to be faithful in the execution

execution and delivery of it. For not only having lodg'd eternally in the bosome of GOD (*Joh. ch.* 1: *ver:* 18.), and having *been sent from God, from whom he received not the Spirit by measure* (*Joh. ch.* 3. *ver.* 34.), but having been GOD himself (*Joh: ch:* 1: *ver:* 1:); he could not possibly fall under the imputation of *either*, without a blasphemy much more absurd, than desperate, tho infinitely so; the Wisdom and Veracity and Fidelity of GOD being never to be challeng'd, before his own self be first spurn'd off and rejected. So that if it be but once granted him that he was the true Redeemer of the World, it must also be confest that *the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus, was faithful to him that had appointed him, as also* Moses *was faithful in all his house: For this man was counted worthy of more glory than* Moses, *in as much as he who hath builded the house, hath more honour than the house, for every house is builded by some man, but he that built all things is God* (arguing from the Deity of Christ, which he most palpably sup-

poſes); *and* Moſes *verily was faithful in all his houſe, as a ſervant, for a teſtimony of theſe things which were to be ſpoken after; but Chriſt as a Son over his own houſe, whoſe houſe are we, if we hold faſt the confidence, and the rejoycing of the hope firm unto the end.* Heb. ch. 3. ver. 1. to 6.

4. Now that he *really* was what he held out himſelf to be, was irrefragably manifeſt from thoſe unqueſtionable Credentials wherewith he evinc'd the Divineneſs of his Commiſſion, and ratified the truth of his Goſpel; the moſt full and exact completion of all that was *typified* and *foretold* of him, and thoſe ſtupendious miracles which even put his moſt enraged enemies to a demurr and aſtoniſhment: of both which none can read the New Teſtament without being ſufficiently informed. And nothing ſure could bring in Controverſie an Authority ſo prodigiouſly ſeal'd and atteſted, but ſomething worſe than meer impudence, or ſingle malice, nay, nor a dreadful compound of both: it being no leſs impoſſible to have manag'd the humours

mours of that people ſo, as to make their very ſelves inſtruments in the accompliſhment of thoſe ſignal and remarkable Propheſies which ſo long before were written of him (as not ſeldom they were, eſpecially about his Crucifixion and the eminent circumſtances of it), without the interpoſition of ſome immediate and more than common Divine Providence in the affair; than to have wreſted even the Omnipotence of GOD out of his Almighty hands to eſtabliſh an Impoſture and Deluſion in the World maugre all his power and reſiſtance. 'Twas then no addreſſing complement of *Nicodemus*, but a reaſonable and ingenuous acknowledgment, when he ſaid unto him; *Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God for no man can do theſe miracles that thou doſt, except God be with him*: Joh. ch. 3. ver. 2. And the like did experience and gratitude bring out of that cured blind man, *ch.* 9. ver. 30. to 33. Neither thought himſelf any other Argument more convincing to aſſert him, than *his works which he did* (ch. 5. ver. 30.); together with

*the teſtimony he received from God his Father* (ver. 37.), and from *the Scriptures* (ver. 39.); from which laſt he infers their being altogether inexcuſable who receive him not (ver. 45, 46.). And therefore he conſtantly appeal'd to his Works and to the Prophets; as is to be ſeen in every Chapter almoſt of that Evangeliſt. But having laid down his life, as well in *Atteſtation*, as to be the great *Foundation* and *Subject* of his Doctrine; he gave the moſt ſolemn and undenyable proof of the truth and perfection of it, By his glorious *Reſurrection from the dead, by which he was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the ſpirit of holineſs* (Rom. ch. 1. ver. 4.); By his fourty days viſible converſe with his Diſciples, and ſeveral others of his followers, ſhewing them by his Hands, and Feet, and hollow Side, what mighty Spoils and Trophies he had carried over Death and the Grave, and by many moſt *infallible proofs* and tokens, that he was certainly alive again, and that it was he himſelf indeed, and no fleſhleſs ſpirit or phantaſm that entertain'd

them

them (*Luk. ch. 24. Joh. ch. 20. 21. Act. ch. 1. ver. 3.*); and By his triumphant Aſcenſion into Heaven, by which he crown'd his wondrous works done upon earth, and at once entered thoſe holy Manſions himſelf, and gave the World the fulleſt aſſurance of the way to follow him thither. And thus we have the moſt accompliſht and generous Religion, founded by the moſt Sacred and Divine Perſon, and confirm'd by the moſt uncontrovertible and prodigious Miracles, that ever the World did, or ſhall ſee.

## SECTION X.

1. AND now that excellent Doctrine not being more *ſo* in its own ſelf, than dearly bought unto him, he would not, after its firſt diſcloſure and painful birth, rather *fooliſhly* than *cruelly* abandon it, as the Oſtrich her Eggs, in the Wilderneſs (*Lam. ch. 4. ver. 3.*), or leave it untutor'd to ſlide back again unto that former Chaos whence he brought it forth. And therefore he took not his long farewell

well of this World, nor mounted that Heaven which *must contain him while the restitution of all things*, before he had sufficiently provided it with faithful and careful Overseers and Administrators, to nourish and bring up its Infant-condition, to advance it to the stature of the fulness of its Author, to preserve it comely & unwrinkled in its first beauty and splendor, to superintend and manage its ordinary and emergent affairs, to protect and defend it against all the violencies and assaults of those its enraged Adversaries which Hell would perpetually let loose against it; and in fine, to propagate and convey it in the same state whereinto he left it, unto all the Successions and Individuals of Mankind, even unto the end of the World, his Love and Design equally extending unto them all. *Having given some, Apostles; and some, Prophets; and some, Evangelists; and some, Pastours and Teachers; for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the Ministry, for the edifying the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge*

of

*of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt: that we henceforth be no more children toſſed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of Doctrine by the ſleight of men, and cunning craftineſs, whereby they lye in wait to deceive: but ſpeaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Chriſt:* Eph: ch: 4: ver: 11. to 15.

2. The chief work then and imployment of theſe, eſpecially the Apoſtles, thoſe greater Luminaries of the firſt Magnitude that mov'd in this new Celeſtial Sphere, was; to be *witneſſes unto Chriſts Reſurrection unto the uttermoſt parts of the earth* (Act: ch: 1: ver: 8.); to *go and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt, teaching them to obſerve all things whatſoever he had commanded them* (Matth: 28: ver: 19, 20:): *and to go into all the world and preach the Goſpel to every creature* (Mark ch: 16: ver: 15.); and ſo to plant and eſtabliſh Chriſtianity in the whole World; to devolve their ordinary

power

power and authority upon others that might exercise the holy administrations of that Sacred Vocation, *where* they were not, and *when* they were gone; and that might perpetuate it by a like conveyance unto others, and these unto others, while the last period and conflagration of all things; and to leave behind them some certain fixt and immutable Rule of Faith and Manners for all the following Ages and Generations that were to come after them, thereby to derive on their immediate Successors those Divine Truths which themselves profest and taught, that these might also do the like (or at least it might be their own fault if they did it not), and so hand it down from Succession to Succession while there should be none more to arrive; their doing of *that*, being certainly as cardinal and important a part of their Office and Duty, as any of it at all; since it was mainly unto it that they had their Masters promise to *be with them alway*, or with the constant transmission of their Doctrine, *even unto the end of the world* (Matth. ch. 28. ver. 20.).

SECT.

## Section XI.

1. NOW this being the moſt eminent and concerning Truſt that ever was committed unto any of the Sons of Men, we cannot but think that he who imparted it, did ſufficiently fit and proportion thoſe his inſtruments for the duly effectuating that great work whereunto he had call'd them, and did furniſh them with all manner of qualifications ſuitable for ſo weighty an employment; unleſs we would tax him of the ſillieſt folly nothing rational could be ſo much dunce as to be capable of, who yet was *the eternal Counſeller of his Father, and the mighty God himſelf; the increaſe of whoſe government and peace was to have no end, upon the Throne of* David, *and upon his Kingdom, to order it, and to eſtabliſh it with judgement and with juſtice, from henceforth even for ever* (Iſa: ch: 9: ver: 6, 7:). 'Tis true he pitcht upon ſome few rude and illiterate men, whom no more polite nor liberal education had refin'd, than what the Fiſher-Boats,

Boats, or ſome other as mean Trade and Occupation could yield them. And it is as true that the deſign they were to go about was the moſt high and tranſcendent, that ever could have been taken up by any thing that was no more but mortal. Let us but caſt a tranſient look upon what they were to perform; that ſo we may the better cognoſce upon their abilities and endowments as they bore any correſpondency unto the event which was to ariſe from them.

2. That then which they were to do was, to preach CHRIST JESUS unto the World. Now this Jeſus went under the repute of being no more but an obſcure and mean Tradeſman, the Son of a poor Carpenter, and ſo deſtitute of all things here away, as even by his own confeſſion not to have ſo much as a Stone upon which to lay his Head. But what did he aſſert himſelf to be? No leſs than ſuch as to renounce his *ſuppos'd* for his *natural* Father, and claim ſuch a conſanguinity with him who is Eternal, as at once to be himſelf and his begotten Son too; to

be

be consubstantial with GOD the Father, and yet a Person of his own self really *proceeding* and *distinct* from him; and so equally as much the Deity as He was, tho nothing less than that same Person which was He. Yet he did not deny but that he was Man also: having likewise averr'd that he had, to his Divine, assum'd an Humane Nature; and so linked them together, as that altho there could not be any two substances more different from one another than these were, yet he had made them at that rate to coalesce and unite into one Individual Subsistence and Person, that the result of both might pass most properly under the denomination, either of GOD, or Man. And therefore he affirm'd that his Mother did lose nothing of her Virginity by her having conceiv'd him; she never having known any Man, but been impregnate by the generative Influence of the Holy Ghost, and overshadowed by the Power of the Most High: so that without ceasing still to be Maiden, she became the Mother of him, who made her own self, and was

GOD

God equally uncapable of any *beginning* and *end* to his Beeing and Existence.

3. And having thus own'd such an as much *mysterious*, as *infinite* Dignity; he took it for no presumption to make use of all the as boundless Prerogatives consequent unto it. Wherefore he commanded the World to Worship and Adore him; to believe these most lofty and hidden Mysteries anent himself, which all the Reason it was ever accomplished withall, would sooner burst asunder and crack into pieces, than stretch far enough to comprehend: and to obey such strict and severe Laws, as Flesh and Blood cannot bear, and seem rather to have been calculated for governing the most sublime and unbodied Spirits that inhabite the Regions above; than those frail and sensual Mortals, who dwell in houses of Clay, and must first shake off these, before they can be wholly disentangled from those Earthly Passions and Desires, which constantly exhale out of their Terrene and Material Composition, and against which all those pure and elevated Enjoyments do mainly bend their rigor and checking force.

force. And so he did oblige all Men, both to humble and subject their very Reason and Judgment unto his mere Say-So and peremptory averment; and also to be ordered in their most touching and important concerns according to the Model which he had prescrib'd them, and confin'd in all their Actions, nay and most secret and whispering thoughts too, within the narrow limitations and restraints, which he had pleas'd to put upon the most prevalent and enticing inclinations of their present frame and constitution; yea moreover, that they should be always ready to forsake Houses, and Brethren, and Sisters, and Fathers, and Mothers, and Wives, and Children, and Lands, and even deny themselves, and lose their very lives, for his Names sake. And thereupon he promised to every one who would become his Disciple, and believe in him, and perform whatsoever he commanded, nothing in this World, save a bare provision of necessaries at most, attended with Afflictions, and Persecutions, and Contempt, and all the outrages

ages that vitious Men and Devils can invent and inflict; but in *that* to come, Life Eternal, and the most raptuous and defecated joys that the immediate fruition of God himself in Glory can abound with. But on the other hand, he did threaten all those who should reject or rebell against him, with the most dreadful and intollerable miseries and tortures, *the gnawing worm that never dies*, and *the sulphurious fire that never can be extinguished*, which his provoked and avenging fury would certainly let loose upon them. And therefore he assur'd the World that he would appoint a solemn Day of final Doom, wherein he should be reveal'd from Heaven with his mighty Angels in flaming Fire, to raise the Dead from their Graves by the sound of his Trumpet; and to summond *them* and the *quick* together from all the corners of the extended Earth, to appear before his terrible Tribunal; and there receive Sentence, every Man according to his Works, whether good or bad: and so that he would then take vengeance on them that had

not

not obey'd his Goſpel, and tumbling them head-long into endleſs Perdition and Wretchedneſs, with thoſe Infernal Fiends, that were to be both the *Copartners* and *Lictors* of their Puniſhment; but would lead thoſe that had ſincerely followed him, with magnificent Triumph to thoſe bleſſed Manſions of Felicity which he had prepared for them; and in the end would conſume this vaſt Fabrick of the whole Univerſe, with ſuch a prodigious Conflagration, as would roll up the Heavens like a Scroll, and melt the Sun and Stars out of the Firmament, and at laſt bury a once moſt glorious World into its own rubbiſh and Aſhes. Verily there is here ſuch a combination of ſtrange and lofty circumſtances to enhanſe the deſign of converting the World unto the belief of him who was ſo cloſly environed with them, as any body might think would have been too much to have dampt and confounded the moſt aſſured confidence, as well, as the moſt exalted accompliſhments, in the very remoteſt aims to engage into it.

3. But this was not all. For had that JESUS, who thus *thought it no robbery to equal himself with God*, publickly in the view of the World made any glorious or magnificent retreat out of it, proportionable to the excellency of such a one as he was; nay had he but gathered himself to his People with that ordinary esteem and respect which even vertuous and good men use to carry along with them to their beds of Dust: it could not have been so infinitely unfeasable to get Himself and his Doctrine embrac'd by the greatest part of Mankind (however much it had been *so*, at least in the supposition of the last of the two ways of departure), as it was upon the account of the *manner* wherein he laid down his life; *that* being no less obnoxious even to *reproach* and *infamy*, than any other consideration about him was to *incredulity* or *contempt*. For now we find him arraign'd before the chief Rulers of his own Nation, and bandied from one to another, as the most prodigious Criminal that ever had rebell'd either against their Religion or Government,

ment, and as ſuch condemn'd to the moſt accurſed and painful death the World then knew; and then treated with all the inſulting indignities, that envy or malice could wreck upon one, as poor and contemptible to all outward appearance, as of high and unuſual pretences (a juncture of circumſtances, which overflowed with matter in abundance, for thoſe exaſperated paſſions to work, & fleſh themſelves, even to a nauſeous revenge, upon); being firſt moſt cruelly ſcourged, and ſtript of his own Cloaths, and, the more inſolently to mock that Kingſhip of which he was accus'd, gorgeouſly accoutred with a flaunting Rob of deepeſt Purple, but crown'd with prickling and merciles Thorns, at once to torture and ridicule him, and in ſtead of a Scepter, made to hold that ſame very Reed with which incontinently thereafter he was to be ſmitten on the Head, and then ludicrouſly worſhipped by the bowing of the Knee, and ſpit upon, and buffetted, and prey'd upon with all the contumelious and diſgracing uſage that could render him the

very Balloon and ſport of his moſt inveterate and infatiable Enemies; and at laſt in ſight of his whole Nation, crucified between two Thieves, as the moſt abominable Malefactor of the three, and even in his ſharpeſt agonies proudly triumpht over by the yet more ſtinging deriſion and revilings of his altogether ruthleſs Executioners, who had ſo little of compaſſion toward all his Miſeries, that the only thing they regrated was, that they could not make them yet greater and more ignominious.

4. Now after all this, when ſuch a train of Sufferings could not but hugely aggravate the improbability of any truth in thoſe averments upon whoſe account they were undergone; that dozen of poor illiterate Mechanicks, alogether unprovided of any humane furniture and advantages, was to go about to keep up his Doctrine a foot, and ſtoutly to profeſs that he had endur'd all thoſe cruelties upon no account of his own, or for his own ſins, but to be a Sacrifice to expiat the offences of the whole Race of Mankind, which had forfeited

forfeited that happy and innocent eſtate wherein it was created; and that (ſuch a Holy One not being to ſee corruption, tho he had thus ſubjected himſelf unto the power of death) they had ſeen and converſt with him riſen again on the third day from the Grave, and beheld him mount unto Heaven, with all the aſtoniſhing ſolemnity that his really being what himſelf ſaid he was could exact. And ſo they were to propagate his Divinity and Religion all over the face of the earth, and *to caſt down imaginations* or reaſonings (λογισμους), *and every high thing that would exalt it ſelf againſt the knowledge of him* whom they taught to be GOD, and *bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Chriſt.* And thus they had every Reaſonable Creature to perſwade unto the moſt myſterious and incomprehenſible Belief of three Perſons in one Eſſence, and two Natures in one Perſon; of the Divinity of a crucified Man, and the crucifixion of an immortal GOD; of the Redemption of ſinful Mankind by the violent death of the offend-

ed Deity; and of the Resurrection of the Mortal Body unto a future estate of eternal misery or bliss, and such like: and also to subdue unto the severest Laws of Vertue and Holiness, and to a life rather of Angels than sinful and corrupted Men, by *denying themselves, and all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living soberly and righteously and godly in this present world, crucifying the body with all the affections and lusts thereof*, and abandoning all those pleasures and delights wherewith any of the carnal and voluptuous Senses can be drench'd and enticed. And therefore they were, not only to encounter the simple and unlearn'd, not only to gainstand any one Sett or Order of People, not only to struggle with the stubborn prejudices of any one Superstition or Religion, not only to grapple or contend with all the repelling and exasperated force of any one Kingdom or Nation; but to catch and overcome the most profound and subtile Philosophie of the acutest Sages, to reform and hook in all ranks and degrees of the most profligate and debauch'd

debauch'd Extravagants, to baffle and overturn the full croud and farrago of all the conteſting Idols that ever fond and tenacious dotage payed reverence unto, and to conquer and prevail over the moſt potent and combin'd oppoſition of the whole reſiſting and enraged, inſuriated World: and that without any voluble ſmoothneſs or Ornaments of Eloquence, without any cunning Artifice of taking Sophiſtry or Ratiocination, without any plauſible or inſinuative methods, any crafty or politick tricks and contrivances, without any roaring noiſe of Drums or Trumpets, or any triumphing power of numerous Legions and inſulting Armies, without the ſutler proposal of any Secular gain or profit, and without any gratifying or complying Topicks, and allurements unto the luſts and humours of deprav'd and ſenſual Creatures; but with that one only Machine and Weapon, the *foolishness of Preaching*. Indeed if we conſult the meer energie and ſtrength of Nature, and take our meaſures from the probable aptitude of ſuch a cauſe toward

the

the production of such an effect, we must acknowledge that even the most Romantick fancy could not have readily invented such another piece of Knight-Errantry as this appears to be; the destroying whole Troops and Armies with one thumping Huff, and cutting thousands even unto Atomes by the strength of some one bluftering *Hectors* Arm, being not so seemingly Fabulous and Chymerical, as trifling and inconsiderable, when compar'd to it.

## Section XII.

1. But God who *brought light out of darkness*, knew also how to *make the foolish and weak things of the world to confound the wise, and those that are mighty; and the base, and despis'd, yea, and those which are not, to bring to nought things that are* (1 Cor. ch. 1. ver. 27, 28): and even in that to evidence, *that the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and his weakness stronger than they.* (ver. 25); and that upon a twofold account: The

first,

first, that *no flesh should glory in his presence, but that he that glorieth should glory in the Lord* (ver. 29, 31.); Since none could ascribe to himself the least share of the praise, who could not pretend to have contributed any thing at all of his own in the Purchase of the Conquest. And the second is intimated in that, *the Preaching of the Cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto them that are saved, it is the power of God* (ver. 18.); or that, tho GOD so order'd it, as that by the Rules of Carnal Reason there might not appear any thing more ridiculous, than to attempt the Conversion of the whole World unto such a strange Doctrine as that of the Cross, by such a despicable handful of poor unbred and forlorn Trades-men; yet in the event it should be made manifest that he had chosen the most admirable method that could have been thought upon for the compassing of his design, in having made use of such Instruments, as no sober or unprejudicate man could ever imagine to be working on their own accord, or mov'd, Automaton-like, by no higher

Principle

Principle than their own Springs and Wheels. For there being such a vast disproportion betwixt *them* and the *effect* that they were producing, as could not but have infinitely dishearten'd and dampt them from ever having made the very slightest essay toward it, and much more have uncapacitate them for bringing it to such a pass; who could ever think but that they were acted and assisted by some supereminent and invisible Power, which could only be able to carry through such an uncommon endeavour, and behov'd to be something hugely above Man, when it effectuat that which had nothing of him at all in it? So that without complying either to the demand of the *Jews requiring a sign*, or *of the Greeks seeking after wisdom, Christ crucified is unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, the power, and the wisdom of God*, (ver. 22, 23, 24.); or without any other Prodigie from Heaven but that one, which resulted from *the foolishness of Preaching*, the converting the World by those few contemptible and unlearned Apostles; and without any other

ther deep ſpeculations of Wiſdom, than what really ſhin'd in the wonderful contrivance of it, its very ſelf (abſolutely conſidered) was Miracle and Reaſon enough to atteſt and demonſtrate the Divinity from whence it came, and the Sacred Authority with which it was inveſted.

2. But all this proceeds upon the ſuppoſition of an entire diſproportion betwixt that Cauſe and Effect upon all reſpects; the only Miracle of This emerging from the ſuppos'd unaptitude of That, and ſo ſuppoſing that there was none prior unto its ſelf to foreſtal it: whereas indeed it is enough, if either the Effect was in its own ſelf a miracle, or ſuppos'd ſuch a proportion (and conſequently miracle) in the Cauſe, as made it none; ſince ſtill a real and unqueſtionable Miracle (whether taken for one ſingle one, or a whole cluſter and ſeries of them) is ſufficient for the production of that effect, which on any account whatſoever can have no more it ſelf to recommend it, than that it is a Miracle. And ſo the Argument runs

thus,

thus, Either the Apoſtles were abundantly qualified, and furniſht with ſufficient Credentials to gain them credite and repute, and convert the World unto the Faith of CHRIST; or they were not: if this latter, then they produc'd an Effect above the proportion of the Cauſe, and therefore a Miracle; if the former, then the Effect was not a Miracle indeed, but the Cauſe behov'd to be one; becauſe ſuch an Effect muſt either be a Miracle it ſelf, or flow from what was ſo; when all that's meer Nature ſtands as impotent in its preſence, as did the Magicians in that of *Moſes*, and palpably acknowledges it to be *the finger of God*. But becauſe ſuch a Miracle as that of the Effect would have only inferr'd the exertion of GOD's infinite Power immediatly in its production, without any elevation of the Cauſe, or operation according to the exigence of it; and conſequently had inevitably neceſſitated the Effect it ſelf, or immediatly produc'd all the ſeveral conſents of thoſe who had embrac'd the Goſpel, without any determination of their own minds.

minds upon the account of any rational perſwaſives or inducements; and ſo had quite overturn'd his deſign of being glorified by their *free* and *rational* Obedience: Therefore it was only conſonant to his Wiſdom and Providence that all the Miracle ſhould fall upon the Cauſe, and the Effect be no more *ſo*, but meerly upon a *moral* conſideration; to wit, that conſidering what ſway and prevalency violent luſts and paſſions has over the Souls and Judgements of men, it ſhould be mightily ſtrange and wonderful that ſo many of Theſe ſhould gain the Field over the commonly victorious Forces of Thoſe. But this does indeed ſerve only to argue and diſcover the miraculous efficiency of the ſucceſsful Cauſe; when thus it does produce ſuch conviction, as even ſo many Souls, biaſt with the load of Fleſh, cannot reſiſt. Whatever then were the *Apoſtles* qualifications and aids from Nature (which was altogether impertinent here, ſo that they had but ſo much of it as ſtill to be men, which they could not want); yet certainly they wanted no requiſite

accom-

accomplishment nor assistance for the discharge of that Office and Delegacy which was committed unto them. So that the perswading the World to be but *sober* and *reasonable* (which I confess was not the least difficulty) was the best step they could make to influence it to be Religious and Christian too; they being to propose nothing but such a manly and noble Doctrine upon such demonstrative and evident grounds, as being but sufficiently weigh'd and considered, could not but put even Scepticism it self to the blush and defeat.

## Section XIII.

1. AND indeed we cannot better commence at the account of these advantages which did fit and qualifie the Apostles for the exercing of all that their Title imported, than by taking notice of that *negative* one, of their being so destitute of *all such*, as were meerly humane and carnal; even all of them, but St. *Paul* alone, and he too *determined not to know*

*know any thing, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified* (1 Cor. 2. 2.). For had they been imbued and train'd up with the finer ornaments and quaintness of Rhetorick, and with the subtilest discourings of Philosophie and canting Reason; and so had attaqu'd the World with elegant and oratorical Flourishes and Schems, *the wisdom of words* (chap. 1. ver. 17.) *and excellency of speech* (chap. 2. ver. 1.); and with deep and acurate Disputations and Arguments, *the enticing words of mans wisdom* (ver. 4.), *and understanding of the prudent* (chap. 1. ver. 19.): neither would themselves have been so easily ballasted with that Humility and Self-denial which was altogether requisite for the Preachers of such a Doctrine, at least to preserve them from adventuring to mingle and blend any thing of their own pragmatical or opinionative fancies and conciets with it; nor yet could *the demonstration of the Spirit, and of the power of God* (chap. 2. ver. 4, 5.) have appear'd so resplendently in the propagation of that Faith, when there had been shrewd temptation

temptation enough to ſuſpect that it was but *cunningly deviſed Fables* ( 2 Pet. 1. 16. ), and ſome artificial and neatly contriv'd Scene of taking Pageantry, invented and ſet on foot by thoſe crafty and deſigning Mountebanks ( as readily they would in that caſe have been conſtructed to be ), and not any immediate production flowing allanerly from the ſuperintending Power of GOD Almighty. Whereas their rude and naked nature, unfluſht with any thing of dreſs or decorement, was the apteſt material that could have poſſibly been fal'n upon, to be ſo employed in the bringing about that work, as to ſecure the World from all occaſion of conjecture or jealouſie that there might be any thing of fraud and deceit, or falſhood and corruption in it; the honeſt plainneſs and ſimplicity of That, being altogether uncapable of whatever could look like forgery or impoſture.

2. But it did no leſs contribute to this, that they were not more ſtrangers to any Liberal Education, and thoſe finer Arts and

and Sciences which ordinarly are acquired by it; than they were little versed in in Buſineſs, and thoſe politick and ſubtile Tricks and Shams whereby People, in matters of any conſequence, are uſually circumvented and impos'd upon. It is but too much kown how infinitly jealous the World is about the firſt Riſe and Origine of Religion in it; and that there is nothing to which that has been more commonly aſcrib'd, than unto the Policy and Cunning, either of wiſe and able Stateſmen and Machiavilians, for overawing the multitude unto ſuch a ſubjection as themſelves had a mind to bring them under; or elſe of plotting and crafty Prieſts, for ſuiting its ſuperſtitious hopes and fears, and thereby ſqueezing its Purſes of what would furniſh them with an opulent and eaſie livelihood in this World, while thoſe their deluded Votaries were to gape, Camelion-like, after the liquid Air of an imaginary one to come. And therefore our bleſſed LORD did pitch upon ſuch a handful of rude and ſimple Men to be his Apoſtles,

to prevent and confute any the like Cavil or Objection that could be made againſt that Profeſſion of which he was the Author: they being from their infancy brought up about ſuch low and vulgar Employments, and ſo taken up with earning their very Bread, and maintaining thoſe poor Families which depended upon them, that the greateſt Cheat they were capable, either to *contrive*, or *atchieve*, could not go beyond thoſe of the Fiſh-mercat, or any other as much beaten place; and far leſs amount unto ſo high and important an affair as that wherewith the Religion he introduc'd among Men was deeply fraughted. So that when ever Chriſtianity ſhould fall under the unworthy impeachment, of being at moſt but ſome ſutle Artifice, invented to delude and befool the World into ſuch an awe and dreadour, as could beſt be ſubſervient unto the deſigns of the firſt Broachers and Abetters of it; there would need no more to daſtard the Calumny from pertinaciouſly continuing in any obſtinate and impudent pretence, than

than that it as much ſurpaſt the power of theſe few contemptible Tradeſmen, who were equally unacquainted with Learning and Politicks, to effectuate any ſuch couſenage and juggle, or deceive the moſt advanced part of Mankind in a tranſaction of that concernment; as it would have puzzled their utmoſt endeavours to have marſhalled all that Matter whereof the beautiful Fabrick of this Univerſe is compos'd, into the ſame order and harmony into which now it is ranked, had GOD Almighty made them the firſt compleat productions of his Creation, and then laid ſuch a Task to their door.

3. It is true that among the many reproaches and ſcandals which profligat and wicked Men have in all Ages moſt ſtudiouſly laboured to caſt upon the Chriſtian Religion, there is none that either has been more common or prevalent eſpecially with thoſe lewd and debauch'd animals, who would both have preſerv'd their Vices and Senſualities, and yet had themſelves ſtruck into reputation too, and

gaz'd upon as the Virtuosi and grand Wits of the World; than that it was nothing but the empty Fable and Reverie of a few silly and ignorant Creatures, first brooded and hatcht in a Carpenters Shop among the Vagrant Dreams of his illiterate Son, who had been train'd up with no better Philosophy or Science, but that Manual Trade which only taught him to handle the Axe and the Chizzel, and better how to Carve a Logg of Wood into a God, than Metamorphose himself into any thing like one. And this has been much insorted unto as the most opprobrious and disgracing affront, wherewith they could fancy to brand and disparage it; and to boggle every body that could but lay any the very remotest claim to Judgment or Reason, from embracing its Doctrine, and joyning themselves to the communion of those upon whom it had gain'd and taken effect. But oh! how inconsistent is Iniquity with its own self? and how blind does Malice render those who are so madly infatuated with it? For besides that Chri-

ſtianity is thus loaded with contradictory imputations by thoſe its vehement enemies, who therefore are ſo much tranſported out of their own ſelves, as hardly to need more to be taught how to be Religious, than how to be Circumſpect and Prudent, even in their greateſt impiety; when almoſt in the ſame breath they uſe to tax the ſame thing of *artifice* and *fooliſhneſs* too: beſides this, I ſay, there could be nothing contriv'd more apt to ſupplant and baffle ſuch a blaſphemy it ſelf, than meerly its own ſelf; becauſe it does eſſentially ſuppoſe ſuch an utter incapacity to work out any conſiderable deſign in the firſt Propagators of that Religion, that whatever of that nature they ſhould produce, could never be interpreted to have been carried on by any other means than the pureſt Truth and Merit of the Cauſe, and ſuch candid and ingenuous endeavours, as equally deteſted and went beyond any thing of craftineſs or diſſimulation. And thus maugre all its Oppoſites *Wiſdom is juſtified of her children*. And ſo it was

not the leaſt of the Apoſtles qualifications for that holy function wherein they were employed, that they wanted all *ſuch* as might have render'd them doubtful and ſuſpicious to any of thoſe, whoſe intereſt it would be to ſift and canvaſs every the minuteſt circumſtance wherein they were concerned, and to find but the fainteſt umbrage of any crack or flaw in their Credit and Authority wherewith to upbraid and defame them.

## Section XIV.

1. THUS our Bleſſed Saviour having ſelected and ſet apart ſuch clean and untainted (tho *earthen*) *veſſels*, to convey the Treaſure of his Doctrine unto the World, that *the excellency of the power might be of God, and not of them* (2 Cor. ch. 4. ver. 7.): he beſtows on them all ſuch advantages and endowments as could beſt evidence the concurrence of his own *finger* with their Miniſtry, and in a more eminent degree ſupplies thoſe wants and defects which their circum-

circumſtances in this World did occaſion. Firſt then, he admitted them to the priviledge of his more intimate converſe and fellowſhip, even *from the baptiſm of* John, when he firſt entered upon the publick exerciſe of his Mediation, *unto the ſame day that he was taken up into Heaven, and a cloud received him out of their ſight* (Act ch. 1. ver. 22.): and ſo they both ſaw with their eyes all the moſt remarkable and material paſſages of his life here on earth, and all the miraculous and extraordinary works that he did in confirmation of his Doctrine and Authority; and alſo heard with their own ears all thoſe Heavenly Diſcourſes whereby he made *known unto them all things that himſelf had heard from his Father* (Joh. ch. 15. ver. 15.), and *gave them to know the myſteries of the Kingdom of God* (Luk. ch. 8. ver. 10.), eſpecially after his Reſurrection, when he *ſpoke to them of the things pertaining to it* (Act. ch. 1. ver. 3.). Now the moſt they were to do being *to bear him witneſs, becauſe they had been with him from the beginning* (Joh. ch. 15. ver. 27.); or

to

to give information of what they had learned only by their senses, and tell the World what they had seen him do, and what they had heard him speak; then, providing they had but the vulgar share of those faculties, together with that of any ordinary memory to retain what these brought in, as twere lamentable folly to doubt that they had; nothing more could be desir'd upon any Physical consideration to qualifie and enable them for their employment, but only, *so* to *instruct* them of the one, and let them *see* the other; since they were thus to be the meer Channel of conveyance unto his Doctrine and Miracles. Hence they constantly provocked unto the immediate reception of what they asserted, by their own eyes and ears, as the most uncontroleable Argument of their being sufficiently qualified to testifie and avetr it; as *Act. ch.* 10. *ver.* 38. to 42. and 2 *Pet. ch.* 1. *ver.* 16, 17, 18. and 1 *Joh. ch.* 1. *ver.* 1, 2, 3.

2. But because they were frail and weak Creatures, lyable either to *mistakes* or *forgetfulness* in what he had said unto them;

them; Therefore, Secondly, *he ſent them the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghoſt, to teach them all things, and bring all things into their remembrance, whatſoever he had ſaid unto them* (Joh. ch. 14. ver. 26.), *and ſent them the Spirit of truth, to guide them in all truth* (Joh. ch. 16. ver. 13.), *and him to abide with them for ever* (Joh. ch. 14. ver. 16.). So that they were infallibly ſecur'd from all manner of ignorance, whether *privative*, which is the not knowing of a thing requiſite to be known; or *poſitive*, which is errour, or the miſknowing of a thing, and imagining it to be otherwiſe than really it is. And Thirdly, becauſe they were not men of ſuch Credite and Authority in the World as to deſerve any Implicite Faith in what they did alleadge; and ſo tho by theſe two advantages they might indeed be fully certain themſelves of what they ſaid, yet could not tranſmit the like aſſurance of it unto others: Therefore he did communicate unto them the power of working Miracles at their pleaſure, and ſeveral other Gifts and Indowments of the

Holy

Holy Ghoſt, as Propheſie, Interpretation, the ſpeaking with other Tongues, the diſcerning of Spirits, &c. (*Act. ch. 1. ver. 8. and ch. 2. ver. 4. 33. 1 Cor. ch. 12. ver. 8, 9, 10. Heb. ch. 2. ver. 3, 4.*); that ſo having the Power of the Almighty at their command, which they could not have but by his own will, they might demonſtrate they had his Warrand and Authority too.

3. And laſtly, ſince they were to meet with the fierceſt oppoſition and reſiſtance that ever the combin'd Forces of wicked Men and Devils could Rendezvouz together, and to undergo all the mockery and deriſion, all the tortures and cruelties, that the moſt implacable malice and exaſperated fury of either, could invent or perſecute them withal; Therefore he forewarns them of all the dangers and hardſhips they were to go through, and trains them up to thoſe ſtrong and generous reſolutions which might animate and fortifie them even to contemn the harſheſt intertainment they could receive from the World for His and the Truths ſake;

and

and by the moſt prevailing and forcible Arguments, drawn from the vaſteſt love he bore them, from the example of his own ſelf who was made their Lord and Maſter, and from the infinite reward they were to expect (*Matth. ch.* 10: *ver.* 16. to 42. *Mark ch.* 13. *ver.* 9. to 13. *Joh. ch.* 15. *ver.* 13. to 21.), he perſwades them even *to rejoice that they were counted worthy to ſuffer for his Name* (*Act. ch.* 5. *ver.* 41.) Nay, becauſe, tho *the ſpirit was willing, yet the fleſh was weak* (Matth. ch. 26. *ver:* 41.), and ſo there was a neceſſity of ſome greater ſtrength than their own to ſupport them under thoſe heavieſt preſſures and afflictions; he improves their Natural by a Divine Fortitude, and makes *his grace ſufficient for them, and in their weakneſs perfects his own ſtrength* (2 Cor. ch. 12. ver. 9, 10.); thus enabling them to undervalue whatever they could do who could only kill the body, and even to *court* and *deſie* all that could be formidable and threatning to Humane Nature, and valiantly to triumph over the acuteſt rigours of thoſe glorious Martyrdoms

tyrdoms which equally incens'd and amaz'd the very Executioners of them; *it being given to them, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake* (Philip. ch. 1. ver. 28, 30.). For besides that any the least Pusillanimous Retraction would have done more to countermine and supplant their Cause, than could their most signal miracles to astruct and establish it; the being thus baffl'd from their pretences being the plain confession of their having play'd the cheat and imposture in the attempt of obtruding them upon the World: such a brave and undaunted constancy under the smartest Engines the most obdurate and barbarous Lictor could fasten upon them, could not but deeply work upon any ingenuous and considering man, and sensibly touch him with the thoughts of their behoving to be mightily ascertain'd of what they so firmly profest, as in the attestation of it thus to suffer their very lives be torn out with all the exquisite and subtile cruelty that even Hell it self could inspire or suggest; and of their not advancing any

design

design or interest of this life, by those means, which did the most inevitably expose them unto all the miseries and calamities of it; but only *that* which they avowed, of making men *vertuous* here, and *happy* hereafter. Thus were these blessed men qualified for that Embassy and Message wherewith their Lord did honour them. And verily he that would cavil at these their qualifications, and would not be fully satisfied with that Furniture and Retinue wherewith they were attended, but would further desire I know not what to make them a Train solemn enough for the Augustness of their Commission; he would but render it more than suspicious that he was resolv'd never to acquiesce in any at all; their being nothing more for invention it self to choose upon, since all that could be contriv'd for gaining them authority and credite is already summ'd up.

Sacr.

## Section XV.

1. LET us now caſt a glance at what they perform'd, and what ſucceſsful returns they brought in for ſuch eminent vouchſafements. And here Firſt we find them to have *filled Jeruſalem with their Doctrine* (Act. ch. 5. ver. 28.). In which there are two very obſervable conſiderations. The firſt is, that they began to Preach their crucified GOD at *Jeruſalem* it ſelf, which was the very Scene upon which all thoſe things, whereby they were to atteſt him, were lately acted. Had they taken Example at the Heathen Mythologiſts, and remov'd their Story to ſuch a diſtance either of Time, or Place, as that none could have been capable to inquire into the truth of it; then certainly, tho it had never ſo much prevail'd upon the credulity of thoſe unto whom it was addreſs'd, yet no prudent man could have yielded any other belief unto it, than what uſes to be allowed unto Fable; which nothing renders credible be-

yond

yond the ſimple pretence of the Relater himſelf. For in either of theſe caſes it behov'd to have been judged only by thoſe evidences which aroſe allanerly out of its own ſelf, ſuch as the conſiſtency of its ſeveral parts with one another, and *that* of the Whole with the common Principles of ſober Reaſon. But theſe could never have proved it to be any thing but meerly poſſible at beſt; and had ſtill left it, as to any matter of Fact, as much queſtionable as any of that nature could be; otherwiſe every handſomely contriv'd Romance would merit no leſs to be believ'd than the moſt authentick Hiſtory that ever gain'd credite and repute in the World. And ſo, however much fools theſe had been who would have made the very remoteſt attempt thus to obtrude ſuch an affair upon mankind, yet they could not have been more ſo, than would all thoſe who had ſuffered themſelves to be wheedled into any the leaſt perſwaſion of it by them. But the Apoſtles of Jesus Christ knew well enough they needed not be driven to ſuch gray-headed or ſtranger pretexts, as the

the Inventions of those feign'd Religions which overspread the rest of Nations, were forced to resort unto. And therefore the first appearance they made was in a Place *where*, and at a Time *when* those things which they asserted were either capable to have been disprov'd and found out, or else they were never so. For being to draw men into the belief of the Divinity of that man, whom many visible circumstances did seemingly disparage from claiming but the smallest advance above his mean and obscure relations, nay did on the contrary expose to the contempt and derision of that whole Nation wherein he was born; and being only to use such Arguments and Inducements for ingaging them into that belief, as depended entirely upon matters of Fact, upon Miracles done, and palpable accomplishments of ancient Prophesies, and a Resurrection made from the Grave; they urged *these* upon the very place where upon those Matters were performed, and when they were so very fresh and recent, as that the whole then living Age could

not

not but know them equally with thoſe paſſages of their own lives, that were either, moſt *remarkable*, or moſt *preſent* unto them. And therefore, as their only deſign and buſineſs was to gain people unto the truth of what they were Preaching, by the moſt clear and irreſiſtable convictions that could poſſibly have wrought upon thoſe, who had not yet arriv'd to any ſuch prodigious pitch of madneſs and diſtraction, as at once to renounce their Reaſon and their Intereſt even in Eternity both together; ſo had any the leaſt circumſtance of what they alleadged been no more but ſome contrivance of their own for carrying on the Plot, it had been altogether impoſſible but that diſcovery ſhould have been made of it, and themſelves exploded as the moſt arrant deceivers that ever made enterprize to impoſe any cheat upon the World. Since all thoſe whom they firſt accoaſted with their Doctrine, were, upon moe accounts than one, mightily concerned to examine and ſearch into it, with all the rigor and circumſpection that any

teſtimony could any wiſe fall under; as being prompted, in defence of their having crucified him whom they held out to be the LORD of Glory, and the Saviour of Mankind, rather than to preſerve their own veriest lives, to catch them but a tripping in any one lie or falſhood. And if they could have been ſo, there was nothing more eaſie than for them to have done it; when thoſe things which, could only be in debate, were ſaid to have no leſs publickly been manifeſt, than is the Sun in the Heavens when with triumphant ſplendor he ſhines moſt radiantly there; the very Eclipſe of that Sun, when no revolution in Nature could have made him ſuffer the like darkneſs, being one of them. So that he who would have then called them into queſtion would have been ſure of this anſwer (*Luk. ch.* 24. *ver* 18.) *Art thou only a ſtranger in Jeruſalem, and haſt not known the things which are come to paſs there in thoſe days?*

2. It is true that the great ſtreſs upon which they laid the truth of what they Preacht concerning their

Lord

Lord and Maſter, was his having *riſen again from the dead.* Since, notwithſtanding all thoſe other Credentials which did give witneſs of him, yet if he had altogether ſuccumb'd unto the powers of the Grave, and his Duſt had with that of the reſt of his Brethren returned to duſt again, and ſo he had undergone the ordinary Fate which uſes to befall the whole race of frail and ſinful Mankind; the moſt that could have been thought of him would have been but that which his very Diſciples did ſay, *Luk. ch.* 24. *ver.* 21. *We truſted that it ſhould have been he, which ſhould have redeemed Iſrael*; inſinuating as much as if all thoſe promiſing hopes wherewith they aſſured themſelves of that great Salvation to be purchaſed by Jesus of *Nazareth*, had met with an entire diſappointment, in ſo far as he was then dead and buried; and that even altho they profeſs'd (*ver.* 14.) that *he was a Prophet mighty in Deed and Word before God and all the people.* Wherefore Christ Jesus himſelf did before hand make his chiefeſt appeal to his being to riſe again

the third day (*Matth. ch.* 12. *ver.* 39, 40. *ch.* 16. *ver.* 4. *Joh. ch.* 2. 19.) And all his Apostles refer'd to his having done so, as the most irrefragable evidence and confirmation of the verity of that Religion which owns and adores him; *Act.* 2. from *ver.* 22. to 36, *&c.* Yet nevertheless that Resurrection was the only thing of all that related to him which seem'd to admit of the greatest scruples and difficulties; He having only appear'd after that unto those who were the persons then mainly interessed in his so triumphing over, both His, and their Enemies, by whom He, and they also upon his account, were made the very Sarcasm and Drollery of the whole Age wherein they liv'd. And so it might have afforded matter enough for jealousie and suspition anent the truth of that affair, that it was only testified by those whom it so nearly concerned to have it believ'd to be true.

3. But (to wave at present all those considerations whereupon the Apostles cannot but be thought to have deserved the most unquestionable credit in all they

did

did aver) that JESUS CHRIST was to rise again from the Dead upon the third day after he had lyen among them, was so sufficiently attested by his own self while yet he was alive, that nothing but an evident and palpable demonstration of the Affirmative, that he still continued to make up their number after such a prefixed time was over, could be enough to countervail and invalidate that Testimony whereby he foretold that he would do so. For even before he laid down his life, the *Works that he did*, and *the Scriptures which he fulfil'd*, gave clear enough evidence that *he was sent from the Father* (Joh. 5. ver. 36, 39, 45, 46.); and so was infallible in whatever he asserted. And therefore unless something as uncontrovertible, as were these Credentials which did vouch him, had positively been produc'd to overturn them (which, supposing they were no less certain than they were, is quite impossible but to be imagin'd, when otherwise there would have been evident proof for both the extreams of the same contradiction); there was nothing

which he did ſay, but what was, conſequentially at leaſt, as much manifeſt and conſpicuous, as it was that he was the true Meſſiah and Saviour of the World, and ſo as were thoſe ſignal atteſtations which irrefragably did demonſtrate him to be ſo. So that, altho he had never been ſeen again of any after his crucifixion, yet, except it had been made evident that, after the third day, whereon himſelf propheſied he was to riſe, his Body was ſtill a lifeleſs Carcaſs corrupting in the Grave, it would have been no leſs evident at *Jeruſalem* (where ſo publickly he had made the Prediction) that after ſuch a time he was riſen again, than it was at his death that *Truly he was the Son of God*, when even thoſe very Souldiers that guarded at the execution thereof, were through their exceeding fears becauſe of thoſe Prodigies which did appear at it, even forced to confeſs ſo much. Hence it was that, even before the two Diſciples which were going to *Emmaus* had known that they had ſeen Him, He did upbraid their *fooliſhneſs*,

and

and *ſlowneſs of heart to believe* his Reſurrection, when they did not ſo becauſe *him they ſaw not*, Luk. ch. 24. ver. 24, 25. Neither were the *Jews* themſelves ignorant of this, when for fear that they ſhould not be able to vindicate what they had done, by ſhowing his Body to be ſtill in the Grave after the third day, and ſo proving him to have been but a deceiver, *they went and made the Sepulchre ſure, ſealing the ſtone, and ſetting a watch*, Matth. ch. 27. ver. 62. to the end. For they were ſagacious enough to know that if they could not do ſo, *the laſt error would be worſe than the firſt.*

4. Now let us ſee how it fared with them. *In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the firſt day of the week, there was a great earthquake; for the Angel of the Lord deſcended from Heaven, and came and rolled back the ſtone from the door, and for fear of him the keepers did ſhake, and became as dead men; and ſo Jeſus roſe again from the dead, as he had ſaid. And ſome of the watch came into the City, and ſhewed unto the chief*

Prieſts

*Priests all the things that were done; and when they were assembled with the Elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the Souldiers, saying, say ye, his Disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept: so they took the money, and did as they were taught; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews untill this day,* Matth. ch. 28. ver. 11. to 15. But, alas! what will not Malice and obstinacy do, rather than yield unto the truth? Yet how far short do they ordinarily come of all their aims and most anxious endeavours? And this, if ever in any instance, is altogether manifest here. For not only was the utmost care and solicitude to secure the Sepulchre, that conscious jealousie could suggest unto the *Jews*, baffled to such a rate, as had almost turn'd their Watchmen into that same condition from which they were set to prevent another to arise, *they became as dead men*; but even when they found that all their diligence and pains was but in vain, they betook themselves to such a pitiful shift for dissembling their convictions,

convictions, and yet advancing that pretext, *his Diſciples will come by night, and ſteal him away, and ſay unto the people, he is riſen from the dead*, which they were ſo very zealous to have precluded (tho they had then entirely precluded themſelves from alledging but the vereſt ſhadow of any thing like it), that there needed no more to betray the *Ultimus conatus* of a deſperate cauſe, than for the chief Prieſts and Elders of a Nation to place their refuge in ſo dull and ridiculous a one as it, *His Diſciples ſtole him away while we ſlept*; there being nothing in it to ſhew that it was the iſſue of ſuch a grand Conſult as it proceeded from, but that they were not bid ſay, that they ſtole him away while they were awake; ſince it was well enough known by every body, that had been no leſs puzzling a task for them, than to have pilfer'd an hair out of a Lions Beard. And that nothing could have been contriv'd more notoriouſly dull and ridiculous to elude the evidence of Chriſts Reſurrection, than for thoſe who were guarding his Sepulchre to ſay that

his

his Diſciples took him away while they ſlept, is even palpable from this, that tho it had been true, and they had really done ſo, yet ſuch lazy Sleepers were altogether uncapable to have declar'd whether there was any theft committed at all, or if there was any who were the thieves. For how could they who were aſleep come to the notice of either? Or if they knew it, wherefore would they ſuffer their own lives to run ſo far in jeopardy as calmly to lye ſnorting (but yet with an Eye peeping out below their Elbow, for they muſt have had that wherewith to ſee what was done), and let another be ſtoln but into the meer pretence of a Reſurrection unto life again? when ſuch a negligence in ſo important a truſt, would undoubtedly have brought themſelves to repeat his death whom they were keeping in the grave, without the leaſt grain of hope ever to riſe thereafter but into any ſuch another pretence too; had not theſe who brib'd them to Lie themſelves guilty of the fault, ſuborn'd their Governour alſo for a remiſſion unto it.

Or

Or yet, if it fortun'd them to look up just as the Diſciples were running away with the dead body of their Maſter, and ſo to behold them making their eſcape with their ſo much deſired prey; wherefore did they not immediatly ſtart to their feet, and ſend the *Hue* and *cry* after them, that ſo that Carcaſs upon which ſo much was depending might have been recovered out of their nimble and cunning hands? So that if there was no other proof nor witneſs given that CHRIST'S Body was ſtoln out of the Grave, while the Souldiers who were watching it were aſleep, but the meer averment of the ſame Souldiers themſelves, there would never have any thing been leſs capable to be diſcredited by the ſtouteſt calumnies of its oppoſers, than was that which the Diſciples ſaid to the contrary: ſince before ſuch a teſtimony could avail the *Jews* in any thing, thoſe drowſie Centinels behov'd to make Anſwer unto the Queſtions that have been now propos'd. And how theſe who profeſſed they were ſleeping could have done ſo, let all the *Jews* in the

world

world be even themſelves Judges. So far does *Iniquity ſtop its own mouth:* Wherefore all they could have ſaid was, that when they fell aſleep the ſtone was yet lying unremov'd upon the Sepulchre, and the Seal put upon it was entire, but when they awakened all was gone, and nothing left for them to attend but the as empty as hollow Grave; and how that was done they were as ignorant as thoſe that ſlept. Now, conſidering what was made out in the foregoing Paragraph, could any man in reaſon ever be ſo much aſleep too, as to dream, that thereby the Authority of Jesus Christ himſelf, who had foretold his own Reſurrection (*Matth. ch.* 17. *ver.* 23. and *ch.* 27. *ver.* 23.), was ſufficiently counterpois'd, and he not truly riſen again from the dead: and eſpecially when all the preſumption imaginable lay on the other ſide, and it had been ſomething more than probable that in ſuch circumſtances none but his own ſelf had conveyed himſelf away, even tho there had been nothing before hand to have render'd it credible, but the *bare word* and aſſertion

assertion of him who was then so a-missing, without those equally *manifest* and *irrefragable* Credentials, whereby he was attested, to procure it the belief of all whose ears it should reach; since such an Event corresponding to such a Prediction of it, could not but have fully evinc'd the truth of both.

5. But further, what more impudent fiction could have been invented than for those Souldiers to have all fal'n asleep when so nearly concern'd to be in the most vigilant posture they ever were into; and that at the very nick of time which did chiefly require the utmost care of their duty? Were they so very prodigal of their lives as for a nod or two to expose them unto the greatest hazard they were almost capable of? Or what Lethargy did so overtake all of them, that not any one could hold up his head, to watch over it, and these of his Fellows, who behov'd to take the nap? But where were they lying when such an irresistable drowsiness possest them? Did they not surround the Sepulchre, or at least keep closly

closly by it? And how then could they be lull'd into so profound a sleep, as that none of them could be disturb'd in it by all the noise, which cannot but be suppos'd to have been inevitable, in rolling back the *great stone* from the door of the Sepulchre, and carrying away the Body that lay there? Assuredly there is no sober man in the world that could impartially reflect how to make any tollerable return unto these Interrogatories, but would pronounce his Verdict of that sleep wherewith the *Jews* did alleadge their Souldiers were overcome, with him who said, *Credat Judeus Appella, haud ego.* And since their chief Priests and Elders assembled together to take counsel what to do in such a pinch and exigency, when some of the Watch had given them an account what had happened them; and nothing could offer it self to relieve them out of the difficulty wherein they saw themselves to be then so deeply plunged, but to unravel again the design of that Watch which they had set to secure the Sepulchre, by giving the Soul-

diers

diers Money to feign that ſuch an univerſal ſleep had render'd them as uſeleſs there, as if they had not been ſent there at all, that ſo there might ſtill be room left them for that pretext againſt which theſe Souldiers were appointed to take heed (for it was palpable to all the World that the Diſciples could never have prevail'd by force over ſo great a ſtrength, and ſo, if to take away the Body of their LORD, muſt of neceſſity have made their recourſe to ſome other method, which could not but ſuppoſe it, either not to have been there, or elſe as much emaſculated as if it had not); they ſhould have infinitely rather enjoyn'd thoſe covetous villains, whom the ſtamp of their Money could mould into any form they pleas'd, to pretend that the Diſciples had cunningly by ſome one Artifice or other got an Opiate or *Lethe* Potion conveyed unto them among their Meat or Drink, by whoſe ſtupifying vertue they were even immerſt into that heavieſt ſlumber, than that of their own accord, without any ſuch violent impulſive, they had fal'n into it; when there had

had been ten thousand times much more probability for the *one* (tho even that could not have in the least been but within so many approaches unto the very umbrage of any thing that was such), than for the *other*. But it seems that they were so hugely eager and busie to have them once asleep, that they forgot to consider how it was likely they could ever have come thither.

6. And now this very Story so manifestly supplanting its own self, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ could not but be as manifest too, as it did so; but especially when the whole Plot and Intrigue was not only detected and quite laid open, but even daily exprobrated unto those who had contriv'd, or were not asham'd to own it; and that by those same Disciples against whom it was levelled. Nay, I make not the least peradventure but that it was more than surmis'd throughout all *Jerusalem*, what was the account the Souldiers gave of their Commission, and how they were brought off from ingenuously publishing the real truth of the affair unto

the

the World; Not only because it looks not probable that such a pack of Rascals could have all of them had circumspection enough to be so very close unto the secret, as that not any one of the whole Caball but would alwayes be upon his peremptores, and so very cautious and warry, as never to divulge or blab out some one suspicious word of it at all: or that there could have been such an Assembly of the Priests and Elders for advising how they should stave off the blow that then was like to fall most sadly upon them, without ever any notice of it should have spread abroad among the people, which was then standing agogg, and anxiously awaiting what should be the event of such an important concernment as toucht both their own Nation, and all the rest of the whole earth: But because there is not the least shadow of any ground for conjecture that the Apostles came to the knowledge of it only by revelation or information from above; and because they did so avowedly make all the Streets of the City to ring with it, and

did smartly charge those Priests and Elders themselves with what they had done, in such a bold manner, as betokened no less than an appeal unto all the hearers whether it was true which they said or not. So that, tho such was the obstinacy and perverseness of that people, that *they had ears and did not hear, and eyes and did not see*; yethe who would call it in question, that there was *sound* and *light* enough for them to have exercised these Organs withal, must be as wilfully blind and deaf, as were they, when most wretchedly so.

7. Yea it is moreover observable that notwithstanding all those stoutest allegations wherewith the Apostles were constantly impeaching the *Jews* even to their faces; yet there was never any thing, save persecutions and afflictions, but so much as hinted at by them to prove the contrary. Neither to this very hour have those stubborn remainders of them, who so sottishly persist in the Traditions of their Fathers, been ever able to say any more for themselves, than what they did, as to

CHRIST's having risen again the third day from the dead: Since all the matter of Fact, as it has been here represented, was *then*, and *ever since*, so very notour and publick, that, however impudent and malicious they were, yet they could never master so much of either, as to embolden them enough for denying even the least Punctilio or Iotta of it. So that all along there has never been any thing else, than this flat and inconsistent alleadgeance, *the Souldiers slept, and the Disciples stole him away*, oppos'd, either by the first hatchers, or succeeding abetters of it, unto what was perpetually upbraided unto them at first by the Apostles themselves, and afterwards by all the Christians of the following Ages. And therefore altho there had never been any further evidence of CHRIST's Resurrection, but what shone so conspicuously out of these circumstances, there was none then living at *Jerusalem* who behov'd not to be steel'd with as much obduracy and perverseness against all the most powerful forces and assaults of Conviction as even

desperate wickedness it self could furnish out, before they could be arm'd enough to resist *what* was so very apparent in behalf of that: and especially when these who made any clutter or buſtle about the contrary, were no less, but infinitely more reasonably to besuspect of partiality in the affair, than were even those whom the latter end of the second Paragraph did seem to question on that head; since they had their Authority and Reputation thereby to keep up among the people, and were otherwise to lose that *esteem* and *interest* of which they were so vastly fond, and to which it was not their custome to make any hover about sacrificing the dearest and most immediate importance, that would only concern them in reference to a life which was no more but of a future date; whereas these poor and despis'd Apostles could have no design imaginable of their own to prompt them upon such an enterprize, attended with such evident dangers, but the clear and prevalent assurance they had of the truth, and the depending consequent Eternity which

was

was to be dispens'd accordingly as that was embrac'd; as afterwards shall be somewhat more fully shewed.

8. Indeed it is acknowledged that JESUS CHRIST did never shew himself unto any after his Resurrection, but unto his own, and those who believed in him, and did afterwards profess themselves among the followers of his Doctrine. But the reason of this we may learn from *those* which he gave wherefore he would not let the Scribes and Pharisees see a sign (*Mat: ch:* 12: *ver:* 38. to 42.) nor tell the *Jews* that he was the CHRIST (*Luk. ch:* 22: *ver:* 67.), nor would pray to his Father for Legions of Angels to defend him against their insolent violence (*Matth. ch.* 26. *ver.* 53.), nor yet come down from the Cross when they highly provocked him to do so, as a Test of his being the Son of GOD, which themselves had pitcht upon, and in which they did promise to acquiesce (*ch:* 27: *ver:* 41, 42.). For he knew well enough that though he had condescended to *any* or *all* of these, yet *they would not have believed.* So stiffly were

they resolved to stand out against all manner of conviction. And the most solemn engagements to believe in him wherewith they endeavoured to get him comply with their demands, were only but meer trains and allurements to nooze him into such a trick as they had a mind to play with him (*Mark ch. 8. ver.* 11, 12.). But especially we have the case about his Resurrection, wherefore after that he did not appear as publickly as he had wont to do before, resolved in that answer which Father *Abraham* gave to the rich Glutton, when asking of him that he would send *Lazarus* to testifie unto his five Brethren, *They have* Moses *and the Prophets, let them hear them, and if they hear not them, neither will they be perswaded tho one rose from the dead*, Luk. ch. 16. ver. 27. to the end. So that for CHRIST to have walkt abroad again as solemnly as the circumstances of his being then risi'd unto a new and glorious life did require, had been for him but to have made needless Parade amidst his altogether irreconciliable enemies to no purpose

pose at all. Nay, rather to have expos'd himself for once more to be crucified by them, than to convince them of the injustice he had already suffered from their cruel hands, or prevail with them seriously to repent for having been so dreadfully guilty of it.

9. Besides, it could not have been so very consistent with the present design of his Providence toward Mankind, so closely to have hedged and fenced it in with such irresistable Demonstrations of what he would have it perswaded of, as that there would have no way been left for it to escape upon any account whatsoever. For then it had been quite impossible for any not to have believ'd all that had been propos'd unto him: and so all would have been overturn'd that was laid down as a Principle to this Discourse in the last Paragraph of the first Section, and God must have settled some other method by which to have glorified himself by those Reasonable Faculties which he bestowed upon man, than any that could relate to his free and arbitrary obedience. Wherefore, as

he

he was never wanting to him in the *sufficient* discovery of himself, & those prescriptions of his Will, by which he would have him to be governed, that being altogether necessary for the accomplishing of his end: So he never us'd to afford him any other than what was *but so*; since that would have as much fail'd in the *excess*, as the former would in the *defect*. And this is something more than insinuated in those Expostulations which our blessed Saviour himself had with the *Jews*, when troubled and tempted with their extravagant desires, *Matth. ch. 16. ver. 1. to 4. Luk. ch. 12. ver. 54. to 57.* and *Matth. ch. 21. ver. 20, 21.* Now, out of what has been said in the foregoing Paragraphs, the Resurrection of CHRIST was sufficiently enough made manifest throughout all *Jerusalem*, tho there had been no other witness to assert it than what has already been produc'd. And so the Apostles began to Preach it, *when* and *where*, if their testimony had been capable to have been convict of falshood, it could not have slunk off without having most palpably

felt

felt what it was to be so. And this is the first Observation which was drawn from the Time and Place at which the Apostles Preaching took its beginning.

## SECTION XVI.

1. THE other thing remarkable is, that the Apostles did, not only at first broach their Doctrine at *Jerusalem*, but also, even *fill that City with it*, or proselyte such numbers of its Inhabitants unto the Faith of CHRIST, that even all the corners of it were crouded with them. One of St. *Peters* Sermons brought in the plentiful Shoal of *about three thousand souls* (Act. chap. 2. v. 4.), and another *about five thousand* (chap. 4. ver. 4.). *And believers were the more added to the Lord multitudes both of men and women* (ch. 5. ver. 15.). It was not many days before when that People did persecute JESUS of Nazareth even unto the cruellest death of the Cross, with such an eager hatred and malice, that (contrary to what uses to be the humour of the multitude in the case even of

the

the baſeſt Malefactors) they had like to have broken out into a Tumult, and furiouſly hal'd him to *Calvary* themſelves, when otherwiſe they were not able to wreſt him out of their Governours hands unto that place of Execution, becauſe after he had *examined him, he could find no fault in him at all*, and ſo uſed all the means he could to get him releas'd and delivered from them: *Matth.* 27. 24. *Luk.* 23. 14, 15. *Joh.* 19. 6, 12. And tho it was much the inſtigation of their Prieſts and Elders that prevail'd upon them to be ſo very violent in the purſuit of their envy and ſpight, and they might have ſlakt and relented in that ſo ſoon as they had cool'd and come to themſelves again; yet that prepoſſeſſion which the Moſaical Law had got was ſo ſtrongly rivetted in them, and they were naturally ſuch a ſtiff-necked and ſtubborn kind of Creatures in whatever they had the leaſt kindneſs for, that thoſe Boute-feu's and Incendiaries could have no very operoſe task of it to work them into all the rancour and heat imaginable againſt one,

whom

whom they represented to be only upon design of robbing them of their beloved *Moses*, and that Religion which he gave name to both together. So that the next difficulty to *that* which of old was in rooting their Fore-fathers any wise deeply in the perswasion of the sacredness of that Institution which *Moses* did communicate unto them (and it is known how almost invincibly great that was, tho there was all the power of Prodigies and Miracles that could have even been wisht to have overcome it), was to influence themselves then to lay aside that tenacious Prejudice anent it, which for so long had been deriv'd upon them, and which they had imbib'd & suckt in with the very first Milk that entertain'd them in the World.

2. Besides, they were so affected with the strong imagination of those Thundrings and Lightnings and Earthquakes which usher'd in and confirm'd that Model of Religion they receiv'd from the Mount, that, as they expected that the Prophet who was coming to evacuate and cancel what *Moses* had been employed

into

into, was to be greater than hers, so they could hardly be brought but to dream that the method wherein He would do that, would be less august and solemn, than what before had reconcil'd so much veneration and deference unto him whom he was so vastly to surpass and transcend. Nay further, the pungent sense which then they had of their miseries and oppression under the insulting Tyranny of the *Romans* (who had subjected them to the sharpest Claws of their devouring Eagle), having made them to apply all those passages of their Prophets which seem'd to foretell the most glorious things of the Reign of the Messiah (but which aimid at those that were to be either *Spiritual* in his *first coming*, or else *Temporal* only in his *second*) so as best to sooth their present condition; they could not brook the thought of any other to be their so anxiously long'd-for Messiah, but such a one as came attended with all the external Pomp and Grandeur which their flattering expectations did suggest, and who would have Legions

and

and Armies enough to deliver them from all their Enemies, and enstate them again into all the Prosperity and Happiness that ever their abounding *Canaan* could have afforded them.

3. Now what possible Motive or Inducement could ever have inclin'd such Throngs and Multitudes of a People, that was so humour'd and circumstantiated, unto such a sudden and extream change, as thus to part with their ancient Religion, and embrace him for the Author of a *New-one* against whom so shortly before they had been so hugely mischievous and vehement; to condescend unto the demolishing of that magnificent Structure of their Ceremonial Worship, at whose erection GOD himself had appear'd in the most terrifying manner that ever shook poor Mortals into any fear and astonishment, and that by him who, tho GOD likewise, made his address to the world only as once before he had done to *Elijah*, neither in the blustring noise of the strong Wind that rent the Mountains, nor with such a dreadful motion as caus'd

the

the Earth it ſelf to quake and tremble, nor yet environ'd with the horrible flaſhes of ſprightly Lightning or flaming Fire, but *in the ſtill ſmall voice* (1 King. 19. 11, 12.), in the moſt humble and mean faſhion that even the obſcureſt of thoſe Creatures himſelf had formed could have been into (ſave only at a time when brought to the very loweſt ſtep of abaſement, and become obedient unto the accurſed death of the Croſs, that all Nature did reſent his Injuries, and the Sun would not ſhine upon, nor the Earth ſtand ſtill under, that higheſt iniquity which was done unto him); and to depoſite and give over all thoſe fond and tranſporting hopes wherewith they had ſo pleaſantly cajol'd themſelves about the outward greatneſs of a *Reſtorer of the Kingdom again to Iſrael*, and in the ſtead of ſuch a one, to follow another, who needed not have declar'd that *his Kingdom was not of this World*, it being ſo much viſibly *ſo*; and who conſtantly ſtole himſelf away from all thoſe importunities that would have been even at compelling him to take

upon

upon him some Secular Power and Authority, and own himself for a King: What imaginable Arguments, I say, could have influenc'd such a wonderful Metamorphosis upon the *Jews*, unless it was that evidence of the truth, which, without the most wilful and obstinate shutting of their own eyes, they could not but behold, and whose conquering splendor was so very irresistable that nothing but Contumacy it self could be capable to brave out its dazling and triumphant Forces? The third Paragraph of the eleventh Section tells us all that could have been temptation unto any for espousing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And what can be found there to have compensated all those disadvantages which it lay under, as it respected that people accordingly as this Section has represented them, except it was the dependance of the life to come upon that Religion which was then so palpably become the only true one; let him who can discover it, make trial of his skill; for mine has not sagacity enough to nose out what lurks

in so dark and latent a corner. So that one might as well attempt to perswade me of the reality and truth of all that ever *Ovid* or *Esop* did fable, as that such thousands of the *Jews*, as even filled *Jerusalem* it self, were brought over by the Apostles of Jesus Christ to believe in Him, without being fully convinc'd of the certainty of his Doctrine by that rational evidence of it, which was sufficient to prevail with any whom Passion and Interest had not entirely blinded and hood-winkt. And as for the matter of Fact, I shall doubt of that when I begin to do so of every thing that my own eyes has not seen; and I fear not to be blam'd by any man of sense, tho I do it not any sooner.

## Section XVII.

1. BUT tho independently of the Apostles Testimony unto the Resurrection of Christ (for to establish that was their peculiar Business) it was so very credible already upon the account of what

what has been ſaid in theſe two laſt Sections, that none living then at *Jeruſalem* could in reaſon but be oblidg'd to yield up their aſſent unto it; yet all the reſt of the World being no leſs concerned in it, than were they, and GOD ſtill uſing all thoſe poſſible means that might neither *out-do*, nor *fall ſhort* of his deſign upon Mankind, the Apoſtles were ſent out, both to confirm, and propagate all over the face of the earth, what of its own ſelf was thus ſo manifeſt in one place of it. And indeed they did ſo affix their Seal to the truth of that Reſurrection, and conſequently of that Doctrine which he, of whom it was aſſerted, did command them to Preach, that, as the World had never underſtood any thing more noble and elevated than was *this*, ſo it had never ſeen nor perceived any Demonſtration or evidence in behalf of *any*, more convincing and rational, than what appear'd to vouch and recommend *that*; unleſs what the Bleſſed JESUS himſelf, while publickly converſant among men, did produce, was ſuch. For what could

be even fancied more abundant and proper to aſſert them, than an entire complyance with thoſe *ſuitable* advantages and qualifications for their being employed in ſuch a work, which the thirteenth and fourteenth Sections did inform us they were furniſhed withal? And this was ſignally eminent in theſe inſtances.

2. Firſt, their Education and Breeding could not render them leſs obnoxious to be jealous'd or call'd in queſtion as men of contrivance and deſign, than did their Practice and manner of Behaviour in the Function of their Apoſtleſhip: So that if they were Cheats and Impoſtors, they were the moſt dexterous and excellent at it, that ever deſerv'd to be branded with the Name; Since their Art did ſo imitate Nature, nay and even almoſt out-do it in an ingenuous candor and ſimplicity, that to diſtinguiſh, which was the One, and which the Other, has now for near theſe ſeventeen hundred years been the aims and ſtudy of thoſe, who (if the *French* Proverb *Il a d' Eſprit parce qu'il a de Malice* hold) were altogether adapted

adapted for ſuch a Criticiſm and imploy-ment, and yet to as little purpoſe, as with great anxiety and deſire. And indeed had they been inſtigated by any other movement than the meereſt convictions of the truth, wherewith they were ſo fully poſſeſt, and their ſingular engagements unto him who had deign'd them the diſ-covery of it, *when he paſt by the wiſe and learned of the world*, together with the preſſing intereſt of their own Souls Salvation; there was nothing but a cer-tain fore-knowledge of events to come, for teaching them how to carry at ſuch a rate, that none might be able to find the leaſt ground upon which to tax them of what they were really guilty of, that could have been ſufficient to have ma-naged the Deſign and Plot of that Scene, which of all neceſſity behov'd to have been laid ere ever they had entered upon the Acting the very leaſt part of it: when every the leaſt circumſtance of it a-roſe out of the former with ſuch a ſur-prizing in-connection, that none could more reaſonably look upon it as any ef-

fect of Intention or Subtilty, than he could interpret the caſually emerging face of a tumbling Dye, to be the inevitable product of ſome *forethought method* which was us'd in flinging it out of the Box.

3. And truly, when the Apoſtles were ſo far from ſticking to their Maſter at a time when even Generoſity conſpir'd with their Duty to have made them done it, that the very *firſt* of them fore-ſwore, and the whole company did baſely forſake him; who would then have imagin'd that within ſome few Weeks afterwards theſe ſame very men would reaſſume to themſelves ſuch a courage and magnanimity, as, in defiance of all that the whole power of their exaſperated Nation could thunder out upon them, boldly to avow that JESUS, whom they had crucified, nay to upbraid them with the horridneſs of the Fact, and even inſult upon the account of his Reſurrection; *This Jeſus hath Chriſt raiſed up, whereof we are all witneſſes; Therefore let all the houſe of Iſrael know aſſuredly, that God hath made that ſame Jeſus, whom ye have*

*crucified*

*crucified* (ſpeaking to their very faces in preſence of a great multitude of them) *both Lord and Chriſt*, Act. ch. 2 ver. 23, 32, 36? But when the very ague and ſhaking of the Conſternation and affrightment was yet upon them, and they had been ſcattered and diſpers'd every one to ſearch out for ſome obſcure and conceal'd place to skulk into, and hide himſelf from the overwhelming force of that Deluge of Malice which ſo furiouſly had then broke out upon their Maſter, and themſelves becauſe of his ſake; was it not pretty like, that they ſhould have either dar'd the confidence, or been gathered together, for watching an opportunity to clench away with that dead body which ſo many Halbards were encompaſſing round about? And tho the Affirmative were granted unto both, yet by what Rules of Argument were they induc'd to preſume upon the drowſineſs and negligence of theſe Souldiers, whom they could not but know would almoſt rather have catcht one of them hankering about that Sepulchre, which was committed to

their care, than even not run themſelves the ſame Fate with him who was immur'd within it. But none can read the laſt *Chapters* of the *Evangeliſts*, and the firſt of the *Acts* of the *Apoſtles*, without finding matter enough, upon which to interrogate thoſe, who talk ſo loudly of their having only carried on the Affair by Artifice and Deceit.

4. As for the manner in which they propos'd their Doctrine, it bated not an Ace of that ingenuity and avowedneſs which was ſo viſible in their Actions. The Croſs of CHRIST was the moſt opprobrious and deſpicable circumſtance, that could poſſibly have been fancied to ſcandalize every body at him, and that Religion which owed its main excellency unto his having ſuffered upon ſuch an accurſed Tree. And yet however harſh and grating a ſound that ſtring did ſend forth, they were ſtill harping upon it, as that which was of the moſt melodious and heavenly Accent that ever was toucht among the ſons of Men. Yea they even gloried in it, and St. *Paul* deprecates that he ſhould ever

ever glory in any thing elſe, *God forbid, that I ſhould glory ſave in the Croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, Gal. *chap.* 6. *ver.* 14. and *he counts all things but dung in compariſon thereof:* Phil. *chap.* 3. *ver* 8. and upon that ſcore does ſtrangely undervalue and ſet at nought all the boaſted Wiſdom and Philoſophy of thoſe *Greeks* that were the moſt renowned for either, 1 *Cor.* chap. 1, and 2. Now had they themſelves wove any ſuch Fable, as Chriſtianity is conſtructed to be, what ridiculous infatuation had poſſeſt them thus to have made the very *Alpha* and *Omega* of the whole contrivance, to be ſo contemptible and choaking a circumſtance, that no deſign imaginable could have ſuggeſted it to any, unleſs it had been either to render himſelf as much the deriſion and mockery of all Mankind as it was poſſible for them to make him, or elſe to try how much their eaſie and ſupineſt Credulity could be played tricks with and impos'd upon? Wherefore if they can be allowed but ſo much Wit and Prudence as is neceſſarily ſuppoſable

for

for enabling them to carry on ſuch a Scheme and Deluſion, if it be to fall under that Character; it is quite inevitable but they muſt be granted alſo ſuch a ſhare of both, as might have furniſhed them with circumſpection enough to have avoided that fatalleſt Rock upon which all the Reaſon in the World could not but have preſag'd their whole Deſign would undoubtedly be daſht into pieces. And ſo 'tis palpably manifeſt that it was none of their own choice or invention to preach, and inſiſt ſo much upon that Croſs, which did thus tend to blunder and diſcredit what otherwiſe would have, upon the account of thoſe ſublime moral Doctrines which it contain'd, been both plauſible and taking too: but that there was a conſtraint and neceſſity laid upon them, a Wo denounc'd *if they ſhould not preach ſuch a Goſpel*, 1 Cor. ch. 9. v. 16. ſo that *they could not but ſpeak the things which they had ſeen and heard*, Acts ch. 4. v. 20. The like inference offers it ſelf alſo from the little complyance they ſhew toward either the *Jews* or the *Gentiles*, as well

in

in matters of Worſhip as of Practice: Whereas thoſe who had had a mind to ſet up a new Religion of their own, would certainly have betaken themſelves to *Mahomet*'s way of it, and fram'd their Model ſo as it might have yielded ſome conſiderable things to each of all the moſt prevalent Factions in World, thereby the leſs to diſpleaſe *any*, and the more ſutly to wheadle and engage *all* of them.

5. But the manner wherein the Apoſtles delivered their Doctrine was not more irreſerved and impartial, than it was ſimple and unſtudied. It has been a common obſervation that Impoſtors and Cheats have their Tale ſo con'd and premeditated that the very Strain and Ornaments wherewith they buſk and dreſs it up, does ſtill bewray ſomething of the Craft and Artifice which lies under them: ſo impoſſible is it for Diſſimulation not to ſtumble or trip in its moſt elaborate tracings of the foot-ſteps and veſtiges of Truth; and even when it emulates moſt to dog out that genuine and native ſimplicity which ſhines ſtill inſeparably from This,

This, it is readily enough dog'd out it ſelf to its own Lodgings & moſt ſecret apartments. But as for my own part I could venture the whole ſtreſs of the affair upon this iſſue, but for the moſt exact and profound Inquiſitor to diſcover unto me the very leaſt Syllable or Iotta in all the Apoſtles writings, that is not the natural off-ſpring and ſuggeſtion of Ingenuity and Candor, or that has but the remoteſt appearance of any thing like preconceiv'dneſs or affectation; they being, in ſpight of all that malice it ſelf dare even hint at, the pureſt obedience unto that Command, and moſt ſignal accompliſhment of that Promiſe, *Take no thought how or what ye ſhall ſpeak, for it ſhall be given you in that ſame hour what ye ſhall ſpeak*, Matth. chap. 10. ver. 19. And ſo by the Rule of Contraries it is evident, that what can never be challeng'd of ſuch an individual concomitant and adjunct to fraud and couſenage, muſt be of a quite oppoſite *nature* and *name* too. Something a kin to this was their never condeſcending to thoſe fawning and ſycophantick

tick expreſſions or blandiſhments where-by thoſe who are Cheats uſually, nay and even neceſſarily become Paraſites likewiſe. For *they preached not themſelves, but Chriſt Jeſus their Lord, and themſelves only their ſervants (to whom they preacht) for Jeſus ſake* (2 Cor. ch. 4. ver. 5.); and therefore *they renounced the hidden things of diſhoneſty, not walking in craftineſs, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifeſtation of the truth, commending themſelves to every mans conſcience in the ſight of God* (ver. 2.) This is alſo fully proved all along from the tenth Chapters to the end of that ſame Epiſtle.

6. And to all this let it be added, that never did any Men in the World contribute more to eſtabliſh thoſe fundamental principles of all Commerce and Tranſactions in it, *viz. Do as you would be done unto*, (Luke ch. 6. ver. 31.), and *Lie not one to another* (Col. ch. 3. ver. 9.), than they did; having enforc'd them with ſuch allurements on the one hand, and terrours on the other, as all humane Promiſes and Threatnings came no leſs infinitely

infinitely ſhort of, than of what Eternity does at once protrack and enhance. Now granting that for ſome hidden and ſiniſter ends they had ſo zealouſly mancipated themſelves unto all the fatigue and miſeries which attended their propagating the Goſpel: yet can it be imagin'd that, either to take the Monopoly of Falſhood and unhoneſt Dealing to themſelves, they had prohibited both unto all others; or elſe had ſo ſeverely interdicted them, the more cunningly to advance That whoſe very Hinges and Poles were rooted into their very Eſſence and Beeing, as if they themſelves could not be ſuddenly ſuſpect of either, when others were forbid the very fainteſt inclination toward any of them? But, beſides that thus they had put themſelves upon the lotch of being found doubly guilty in a matter of the higheſt concernment, and ſo exterminated all humane converſe as the greateſt Plagues that ever broke out into it; when they had teach'd the World the moſt ſutle and miſchievous method to *murther under truſt* that ever it had been acquainted with before,

before, and first to curry and toll on every body into the most implicite confidence and belief that the faireſt pretences could ſuborn, and then give him the fatal ſtab when thus he had denuded himſelf of all his Armour and means of Defence: beſides this, I ſay, they had inſtead of ſupplanting *others*, helpt mightily to prompt them how to undermine *their own ſelves*; ſince the moſt obvious and natural Teſt that uſes to offer it ſelf unto thoſe who are concern'd to examine the broachers of any novel Religion, is, whether or not they did exemplifie it by their lives and converſations, and tranſcribe their Doctrine into their Practice; and ſo there would have been a twofold occaſion (*one* by the common obligation of enquiring after the truth, and *another* by the preſent conſideration) exhibited unto them, for making all the diligent ſearch and ſcrutiny into the reality of what they averr'd, that poſſibly they could, and the utmoſt endeavours to varniſh and ſet off that wrinkled and rugged Face (which was ſo expos'd to inſi-

nuate

nuate and beguile ) could not probably escape such a multiplied warrineſs and inſpection. So that had there been any policy or deſign anent their medling with thoſe Precepts they ſo much recommended, they had hugely miſtaken in it, when they had done themſelves a far better office to have let them alone; eſpecially when if they had contriv'd their buſineſs handſomly enough, they could not have ſtood in need of them; and if they had not done *ſo*, and therefore they were thought requiſite, there was then, in any prudent reflection, the leaſt exigence for them at all, becauſe the leaſt for any thing that could ſollicite ſuch an Inquiſition as they certainly would.

7. But when they were no leſs zealous to have all men ſo far to own their own Reaſons and diſcerning Faculties, as to canvaſs every Doctrine that could be propos'd unto them, with the outmoſt caution and advertency that their circumſtances could morally allow, before they gave any ear unto it, and did admit it into their belief and perſwaſion; than they were

were to have them prone and ready to entertain ſuch thoughts of their own veracity and faithfulneſs, as might ſuit thoſe ſtricteſt commands of both, whereby they did ſo ſeverely tye all others; ſhall it be imagin'd too, that this was alſo done with the greater artifice to prevent ſuſpition and jealouſie? as if they could have thought, that when they had taken all the pains that they could, to get their injunctions the moſt punctually obeyed, yet ſuch a one, tho the fundamental to all the reſt (for none can ſecure themſelves of anothers obſequiouſneſs to their will, before he be once ſufficiently *convinc'd* of the obligation that ſubjects him unto it), would ſupplant its own ſelf, and (becauſe of a preſumption that thoſe who had ſo vehemently preſcrib'd it, could not readily need to be treated with that circumſpection which it did ſo rigorouſly enjoyn) would be interpreted ſuch a piece of their Ingenuity, as deſerved not to fall under any other notion, but that of a Complement which ought not to be ſpoil'd.

8. Indeed he *who came to call men out of dark-*

*darkneſs into his marvellous light* ( Act. ch. 26. ver. 18. and 1 Pet. ch. 2. ver. 9. ), *And in whom was life, and the life was the light of men* ( Joh. ch. 1. v. 4.), and *who was the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world* ( ver. 9. ), as being *the light of the world, and he that followeth him ſhall not walk in darkneſs, but ſhall have the light of life* ( ch. 8. ver. 12.), nay who was *God bleſſed for ever* ( Rom. ch. 9. ver. 5.), *who is light, and in whom is no darkneſs at all* ( 1 Joh. ch. ver. 5. ); Indeed it can never be imagin'd by any who does not wickedly ſhut his Eyes againſt that *Light*, that He, or the Religion of which he was both the *Object* and *Founder*, ſhould not be able to abide the faint glimmerings of our frail and ſhallow Reaſon, but ſhould ſtand in need of the thickeſt ſhadow of dull and lazy Ignorance to ſhroud himſelf under, and ſet off thoſe courſe Wares ( according to that ſuppoſition ) which he would not get vented in the open and Noon-day. No, no. He who was Eſſential Reaſon himſelf, and the *Father of our*

*Spirits*

*Spirits* (Heb. chap. 12. ver. 9.) as much, as of our Bodies, could never aim at obliging us to believe any thing, but what was asserted with evidences and grounds proportionable to the wisdom of the Author whence it deriv'd its authority. And he better knew the nature of those reasonable Creatures which his own hands had formed, than to think of ever prevailing with them to yield their assents unto any such sublime and heavenly Doctrine, as was either so mysterious and lofty in it self, or so very contradictory to the interests of Flesh and Blood, and those carnal Souls which are born down to the Earth with the heaviest load of Sin and Corruption, as was his; without palpable and manifest convictions, and such irrefragable and *infallible proofs* (Acts ch. 1. v. 3.) and demonstrations, as might render it more tollerable and rational for them to deny, even almost their own very Beeings, than what was so manifestly attested and confirmed by him: when he could not but see, that, tho at his pleasure he might either infa-

tuate and distract them, or yet annihilate and turn them back again to that eternal Chaos whence at first he drew them out; yet he could never at once preserve them in their right wits, and the due exercise of those faculties which he had bestowed upon them; and also make them admit of his Religion, without sufficient arguments to perswade and recommend it. And therefore as often as he found his credit and testimony to be questioned, he had always recourse unto those Miracles and Prodigies, which he wrought to gain him reputation and authority; and which were so very abundant for that end, that even those who could have the perverseness and obduracy to resist the *influence*, could not yet command so much of either, as to be able to controvert the *Being* of them also (*Joh.* ch. 11. v. 47.): Thus he appeals to *the works which the Father had given him to finish; the same works that I do* (said he *chap.* 5. *ver.* 36.), *bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.* Yea he joyns issue with his Hearers upon the account of these, and remits his whole

Cause

Cauſe to be judged according to them; *If I do not the works of my Father* (ſpoke he *chap.* 8. *ver.* 37.) *believe me not. But if I do, tho ye believe not me, believe the works that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him* (ver. 38.). And conformably did his holy Apoſtles and Meſſengers propagate his Goſpel after his aſcention into Heaven; ſtill provoking to thoſe rational evidences whereby their Authority was aſſerted; and therefore ſuppoſing that without theſe none could be obliged to afford them the very ſmalleſt grain of belief. And ſo leſt anybody ſhould ever fancy that any Chriſtian was blindly to give up his judgment in an implicite or groundleſs aſſent, it was made a part of his *duty* as much, as before it was his *prudence*, to *ſearch the Scriptures* (Joh. chap. 5. ver. 39.), and *prove all things, that he may hold faſt that which is good* (1 Theſſ. 5. 21.), and *not to believe every ſpirit, but try the ſpirits whether they are of God* (1 Joh. chap. 4. ver. 1.) that ſo he might *be ready always to give an anſwer to every man that asketh him a reaſon of the*

*hope that is in him* (1 Pet. ch. 3. v. 15.). So that justly might the Apostle call the Christian Religion, a *reasonable service* (Rom. chap. 12. v. 1.); or such a Faith and Obedience, as was backt and environed with all the enforcements and evidences of reason, for procuring it the *heads* and *hearts* of all who should but come to the full and sufficient notice of it.

9. I doubt me greatly if all those who lay the stoutest claims to the true Christian Profession will deal at such an ingenuous rate, and either own the Theory or Practick of this Doctrine; and who therefore cannot but be the men of all the World most lyable to be call'd in question. But how the Apostles of Jesus Christ upon the account of it should come to be *so*, is so very unaccountable, that let the suspicious World conjure up to themselves whatever pretexts and dreams and imaginations they please, out of those bottomless jealousies which their lusts, and only their lusts does suggest to them; yet they shall as soon

perſwade me that *Julius Ceſar* had no other deſign in all his ambitious Battels and Victories, whereby the whole World was like to have faln under the ſway of his Scepter, but only the more certainly to render himſelf thereafter the moſt pitiful and abject Slave, that ever was trampled upon by the proudeſt foot of Inſolence it ſelf; as they ſhall do, that the Apoſtles did ſo recommend it unto Mankind, not to embrace any Religion whatſoever, before once they had fully aſſur'd themſelves of the infallible truth and reality of it, only the more cunningly to get them yield up their Judgments with a blind and credulous aſſent unto what they were making it their buſineſs to promote. And thus on ſeveral accounts it is palpable in this Section how much the Apoſtles did comply with their abovementioned ſuitable advantages, as to that firſt Inſtance which was given.

## Section XVIII.

1. THE second shall be in those Miracles and stupendious Works which they did in confirmation of that Doctrine they were Preaching, and whereby God himself did visibly give testimony of his concurrence with them. And in these they were so very signal that they could hardly be said more to repeat the *mighty Words*, than the *mighty Deeds*, even of their Divine Master himself. That first effect of the descent of the Holy Ghost upon them, their *speaking with other Tongues* (Act. ch. 2, ver. 4. to 12.), was so manifest and undeniable an instance; that he must be no less partial and disingenuous who in the least would snarl or cavil at it, than were those very *Jews*, who choos'd rather to attribute it even unto the Fumes and Vapours of *new Wine* (tho the last refuge they could possibly have betaken themselves unto, because beyond *that* nothing could have been imagin'd more palpably flatt and ridi-

ridiculous), than give glory to GOD, and ſuffer themſelves to be overcome with ſuch an evident Demonſtration of his power and aſſiſtance. For what more wonderful and ſtrange could have been produc'd, than that theſe rude and illiterate men, who had never been ſo much as initiated into the very firſt liſpings and ſpellings of Learning, for ought that could be preſum'd of them, ſhould on a ſudden ſo utter and expreſs themſelves in ſeveral diſcrepant Idioms and Languages, as that a vaſt *multitude, made up of Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Meſopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Aſia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Lybia, about Cyrene, and ſtrangers of Rome, Jews and Proſelytes, Cretes and Arabians, ſhould hear them ſpeak the wonderful works of God, every man in his own tongue, wherein he was born?* And how great was the multitude which was witneſs of this, may be conjectur'd from ſuch a parcel of it, as was thereby convinc'd of that truth, which thus in the very diſ-

ſemi-

ſemination was ſo convincingly atteſted.

2. And upon the back of this Miracle followed another not a whit inferior to it in any circumſtance whatſoever; which was the healing of the lame man, who had been ſo from his mothers womb, and was known to have been ſo by the whole City, and was above fourty years old; and that not in a corner, but at the Gate of the Temple when the appointed hour of common Prayer made all the people to flock thither, and when they had come in ſuch numbers, as (notwithſtanding the vulgar hatred that every where did prejudice all men againſt theſe Apoſtles, yet nevertheleſs) had five thouſand to ſpare unto them (*Act. ch. 3. and 4.*). We know with what Apparatus *Annas the High Prieſt, and Caiaphas, and John and Alexander, and as many as were of the Kindred of the High Prieſt*, and ſo as were enemies to the Name of Jesus, who was lookt upon as the common enemy of the whole Tribe; were gathered together to cognoſce upon that affair. And

yet

yet how pitifully they came off, tho no doubt they did employ their utmoſt invention to find any the leaſt matter whereupon to quarrel; is to be ſeen in *Act. ch. 4. ver.* 13. to 22. For they ſaw ſo little likelihood that theſe, who *were unlearned and ignorant men*, could have ſo boldly defended themſelves, and pleaded their own cauſe in the face of ſo ſolemn a Sanhedrim, and far leſs *that by their own power or holineſs they could have made that man to walk*, that even they *themſelves marvelled*. So that *beholding the man which was healed ſtanding with them, they could ſay nothing againſt it*; nay could not but confeſs, when moſt ſeriouſly conferring what to do in ſuch a juncture, *that indeed a notable miracle had been done by them*, and that it was *manifeſt to all them that dwelt in Jeruſalem*, *and* therefore *they could not deny it*. But becauſe they found themſelves in ſuch a ſtrait, that, either they muſt ſuppreſs ſuch a miracle, or elſe own him who would ſuppreſs themſelves; they did ſtrictly *command and threaten them*, *not to teach any*

*more*

*more in the Name of Jesus.* And yet *finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people; for all men glorified God for that which was done,* they were forc'd *to let them go.* It were altogether superfluous to Comment any further upon the several considerations, which are to be found here so conducive to the present purpose in hand; since they are too much obvious (not to presume) that every Reader will discover them himself.

3. The fifth Chapter of that forecited Book does also give us an account of a further exercise of that Power which was conferr'd upon them. What more prodigious, than for a Man and his Wife even to be Thunder-struck, not with that terrible *voice that breaketh down the stately Cedars, that shaketh the Wilderness, and maketh the Hinds to calve*; but with the meer rebuke and expostulation of a poor Fisher-man? *So that great fear came upon all the Church, and upon as many as heard these things* (ver. 11.). Neither was there less manifestation of that uncontrolable Power which waited upon him,

when

when he rais'd *Tabitha* to life again after he was dead, *as it was known he did throughout all Joppa* (ch. 9. ver. 38. to the end); than thus without any violent cause, but that which was invisible, to make those shrink down dead, who just before were in life and perfect health. But since to narrate all the particulars would have swell'd that Book to too intollerable a bulk; therefore in the general we are told, that *by the hands of the Apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people, insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by, might overshadow some of them:* And that *there came also a multitude out of the Cities round about into Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits, and they were healed every one.* And yet tho *the High Priest was filled with indignation, and called the Counsel together, and all the Senate of the children of Israel*, to objurgate and punish them for having so transgrest their former commands, and slight-

ed

ed all those utmost certifications and menaces wherewith they strove to enforce them; and tho *they were even cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them*, when they saw that nothing else would do with them, but that the rather they preacht *the resurrection of Jesus*, and that God *had enabled him with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour*, and that *they, together with the Holy Ghost, were witnesses of these things*; and so, tho they slipt no means unessayed how they might curtail and evacuate the influence of those miracles which was spreading so very abundantly: Yet we hear nothing at all of any juggle or trick that they could impeach them withal, or detect in them; but only that *they did beat the* Workers *of them*, and so *let them go.*

4. Neither was that eminent Power only confin'd within the Walls of *Jerusalem* alone; but extended as far as the very bodies which it haunted could transport themselves; nay as far as could be any thing that could be brought from them; for *God wrought special miracles by the hand*

*of*

*of* Paul, *ſo that from his body were brought unto the ſick, hand-kerchiefs or aprons, and the diſeaſes departed from them, and the evil ſpirits went out of them* (ch. 19. ver. 11, 12.). Thus it deſcended with *Philip* to *Samaria*; and by vertue thereof *unclean ſpirits, crying with loud voices came out of many, and many taken with Palſies, and that were lame, were healed*, chap. 3. ver. 7. But whoever traces along the Journeys of thoſe indefatigable Men, in planting the Goſpel through all the World, will never miſs to find *God bearing them witneſs, both with ſigns and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghoſt.* Heb. ch. 2. v. 4. So that juſtly might the inference be, *how ſhall we eſcape if we neglect ſo great ſalvation, which at the firſt began to be ſpoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.* ver. 3.

SECT.

## Section XIX.

NOW let us add this laſt inſtance of their Sufferings for the ſake of that Doctrine, which nothing could deter or frighten them from avowing and preſſing upon the World; and *theſe* as well *active*, as *paſſive*. What ſedulous and unwearied induſtry and pains, what toil and labours and travels and watchings, what peregrinations and perils, what an ambulatory kind of life, what neceſſitous and ſtraitned, what inconvenient and uneaſie, what vext and torn and miſerable and deſtitute; how much hunger and thirſt, how much cold and nakedneſs, how much contempt and opprobry and deriſion, how much hatred and ſpight and envy and malice; how many Priſons and Goals and Dungeons, how many whippings and bonds, how many hazards and dangers, how many hardſhips and perſecutions and afflictions, nay, how many Croſſes and Racks and Gibbets and Swords and Axes and Flames, and other Engines and Inſtruments

ſtruments of helliſh and wicked Cruelty, and ſo how many tortures and deaths, did they not undergo and ſuſtain in their propagating that Faith, whoſe *firſt* Being it owed to a crucified Head, and therefore could not but be beholden for its *ſecond* unto *proportionable* Members? Methinks I ſee a poor Epicurean, whoſe very ſoul has always been ſteeped in the ſofteſt luxury and pleaſures, even ſwooning and fainting after he has but read theſe eight Verſes of the eleventh Chapter of the ſecond Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, from the twenty third to the thirty, wherein St. *Paul* ſends them the Catalogue of what himſelf alone had met with and endur'd. And yet with what heroick fortitude and magnanimity of ſpirit, with what cheerfulneſs and alacrity, yea and even ambition and triumphing too, did they go through all theſe difficulties, and encounter all thoſe ſevereſt rigours and inflictions? and that notwithſtanding it was but of late that they had ſhewed themſelves maſters of ſo much courage as but to dare to appear within the very fartheſt ken of

any

any thing that could annoy or hurt them, or even ſo much as but to face with any confidence the pooreſt Kitchine-maid that would accuſe them of *having been with Jeſus of Nazareth*. Mat. chap. 26. ver. 56, 71.

2. Certainly it muſt have either been ſome ſtrangely powerful reſolution, inſpir'd by more than common inducements, that now on a ſudden could thus work them up to the very contrary extream of their wonted temper and conſtitution: or elſe ſome wonderful kind of foreſight and providence, that did before inſtruct them to reſemble the Coward, ſo very naturally, as the moſt faint and miſgiving hearted Creature, that ever ſhrunk under the apprehenſions of terror and fear, could not have really done it more; that ſo their boldneſs and fortitude might ariſe out of that former repute, of being the meereſt daſtards that Mankind was ever diſgrac'd withall, which ſo induſtriouſly they had acquir'd to themſelves, like the Sun out of a Cloud, with the advantagious ſurpriſe of a greater brightneſs

brightneſs and luſtre; and that the World might thereby be tempted to conſtruct ſome extraordinary cauſe to have been the author of an effect that was extraordinarily ſo. And which of the two was really the thing, let him; who cannot breath but he muſt ſcruple whether his Lungs be in motion or not, make the hover; for none elſe, I am ſure, will do it.

3. The truth is there was hardly any greater Miracle among all they did to atteſt the truth of that Religion which coſt them ſo dear, than its having done ſo: ſince it undoubtedly went no leſs vaſtly beyond the utmoſt endeavours of meer Nature to animate and ſupport them under ſuch a heavy burden of torments, as had cruſht the ſtouteſt *Atlas* himſelf, even into nothing, and more than that, if more had been poſſible; than it would have non-pluſt all its powers to make a Star drop from the Firmament, or Sable the Original One with darkneſs, without the interpoſition of ſome opacous Body, to intercept its moſt dazling and refulgent ſplendor from our looking eyes. And

that even, altho they had been assisted with all the common influences that use to flow from the fullest appearance of the truth of an affair, supposing that no more sublime aides of Divine Grace had superveen'd to strengthen and encourage them.

4. But if all had been but a cheat and forgery upon whose account these sufferings were undergone, then to what an infinite pitch had the Miracle been enhanc't and aggravated. That not one amongst so many as bare testimony of CHRIST's Life and Doctrine, should have prov'd false to the rest, and discovered the Imposture; That all the Arts of Torment, all the rigorous cruelties and fiercest Persecutions, should not be able to force but one single confession out of any of them, or make their tongue to faulter in their mouth when they were uttering the lie; That amidst the hotest flames, and under the sharpest, the acutest pains and agonies, the most lacerated and pitiful estate, never the least qualm should be seen to come over any

of their hearts, nor his courage to sag, nor himself to be dampt or agasted; but that with undaunted stiffness of Spirit, all of them (maugre all the tortures that could reach even the utmost capacity wherein mankind could be passive) they should be true and constant to one another, and endure any thing but the secret to be extorted out of them, or the mistery and confederacy to be unfolded, or get the smallest vent: That I say, they should all of them have so behav'd in advancing a meer Trick and delusion, upon any consideration whatsoever; can never be so much as *imagin'd* without a madness next door to *that*, which had prompted them even to *do* so.

5. And especially if on the other hand it be noticed that no less pains was taken upon them, with the most bewitching allurements and promises, and all the insinuatory and enticing methods, that either Riches, or Honours, or Reputation, the only valuable engagements of this present World, could furnish matter unto. So that they could not be constructed

more to have imitated their Blessed Master, as he was a Man of Sorrows and Sufferings, by taking up their Cross and following him; than as he despis'd the Devils ταυτα παντα, that whole-sale proffer of the whole World which he made him, by their generous contempt of all its most ravishing and smiling favours and blandishments. And yet the glittering shine of a few pieces of Silver could be so extreamly prevalent with one of twelve against the truth, as to bribe him unto a treachery so prodigiously odious, that nothing under that name can be render'd more so, than by branding it with That of him, who thereby made himself the very Proverb, and even Abstract of such a baseness and degeneracy: tho afterwards when he saw the mischief he had done had proceeded to a length whence he was not able to bring it back again and redress it, he choos'd rather even to end his life with a Halter, than abide the dreadful noise of those horrours which the cry of innocent blood sounded constantly in his ears, or suffer the smartest pangs and

gnawings

gnawings of the Remorse wherewith he was overtaken, because he had so impiously betray'd it. Wherefore that any Men could have been so in love with a Lie and their own Fable, as for its sake to have thus, not only endur'd the utmost Miseries and Tortures, and even Death it self; but also rejected and contemn'd whatever this flattering World could assault them withall: is so infinitely unaccountable and stupendious, that the former title of madness and frenzy, were but too gentle and smooth a reproach, wherewith to besputter him, among whose very dreams it should get liberty to enter: since he behov'd to be bereft of something else than his Wits, who could fancy that such a company of men, could be so, not only of theirs, but even of their Passions, and Senses too.

6. And as their Sufferings was the last Testimony they could give unto that Doctrine upon whose account they did undergo them, the laying down of their life (as all of them did, save St. *John* alone, who yet owed his preservation to

a Miracle, the one of the greateſt, yet not more ſo, than the cruelty which it did enervate and defeat) being one of them; ſo were they the laſt aggravating circumſtance that voucht them to the World, and did preoccupy all manner of objection wherewith their authority, might be capable to be aſſaulted. For had all men been of *Gallio*'s temper, and *cared for none of thoſe things*, there might perhaps have been ſome ſhadow of probability in it, that during ſuch an eſtate of indifferency about matters of Religion, the Apoſtles had at unawars ſurpriz'd the World with theirs, and *ſowed thoſe tares* (as the Infidel calls them) *when the houſholder and all his ſervants were aſleep.* But God out of his infinite condeſcention to Mankind, did no leſs effectually provide againſt, than he clearly foreſaw ſuch a Cavil; having by his all-wiſe Providence ſo order'd it, as that the Religion he was abetting, might not more be the Reſult of that Induſtry, than the Trophy of thoſe Sufferings, which thoſe, whom he did imploy to advance it, did

not

not grudge in the performance. And therefore the Apoſtles did no ſooner appear in the World upon the deſign, for which they were conſecrated with ſo glorious a Title; but, as if ſome ſavage Tygers had broke looſe to devour the whole ſpecies of Humane Nature, there was none almoſt that own'd any claim unto that, who did not quickly beſtir themſelves with all their power and might, totally to extirpate and ſuppreſs them. So that the noiſe of their attempt could be no more haſtily ſpread abroad, than it as much alarm'd and put in commotion all the Courts of the whole aſtoniſhed World, as before the birth of their Lord had done That of the quaking and jealous *Herod*; and it then became the task and buſineſs of every body, who could, either *command*, or *wield* the fatal Inſtruments of Execution, furiouſly to ſet them a work upon thoſe poor Apoſtles, againſt whom nothing was reputed too cruel, that could any wiſe be ſubſervient unto the utmoſt ſpight and revenge wherewith they were ſo virulently perſecuted. Thus

was

was their first entertainment in the World. And yet maugre it all, they triumphantly went on with their affair; and the Cross of Christ became at last the top Jewel and decorement of those proudest Crowns, which had before so much appear'd in array against it.

## Section XX.

1. I Am not ignorant that a desperate Crew of brain-sick and giddy People, transported with the fanatick, or rather fantastick Enthusiasms of a mistaken Zeal (not to give it any worse word, tho I am sure it deserves one), have of late afforded the wicked World something like an instance wherewith to confront and confute all that has been said as to this last Section. These indeed are a kind of Folks, so possest with *I know not what* busie Imagination, as not only crams their Heads with strangely delusive & odd Chymæra's & Fancies, not more worthy to be treated with all the ridicule and raillery imaginable, than they are blasphemous and abo-

abominable of their own ſelves; but alſo fills their Hands with ſuch deſpicable, the barbarous Weapons of Cruelty, Sythe, Pitch-forks, Spades, Flails, &c. which nothing but madneſs and infatuation could have made them ſnatch up; and that to perpetrate the moſt odious Crimes of Rebellion, Regicide, Sacriledge, Murther, &c. that ever came to ſuch a height in any civilized, and far more any Chriſtian Nation. So that they have become the utmoſt reproach and diſgrace of ours, and of that holy, unblameable, and undefil'd Religion which we profeſs.

2. And yet theſe Men, if their outward form can gain them the credit to be call'd ſuch, there being nothing elſe in them to do it; even theſe, ſuch as they are, have turn'd it cuſtomary to go to the Scaffold with ſuch an inſolent undauntedneſs, as if they went there, rather to act the part of ſome Mountebank or Bravado, than that of a Criminal, or Malefactor. And aping even a kind of *Roman* fortitude and courage, they give up their necks to the Hangman (when for



once

cause but to say *GOD save the King*, they could preserve them to be their own) with something of a mungrel grimace, engender'd betwixt grinning and smiling, which would be at insinuating as much to the Spectators, as if they even rejoyc'd thus to be put to death for their beloved and darling Opinions and Practices. Indeed I think (with submission to Authority) that the only pertinent Phlebotomy wherewith their Veins could be let Blood of, were that of a Launcet; and that no kind of Hemp could be more properly applyed to any other place of them, than their Shoulders: a *Bridewell* or *Bedlam* being the fittest punishment that they could be condemn'd unto. And these are they from whom some can have impudence enough to draw their inferences, against those, which the sufferings of the Apostles do offer unto us.

3. But which of the two, those who *give*, or those who *take* the occasion of them, are the most disingenuous and unworthy, these following disparities betwixt the Apostles and those Fanaticks

( Oh!

( Oh! the comparison ) shall determine. First then, tho the Apostles were of the meanest extract and education, yet were they men of fixt and solid Heads, very reasonable and vertuous; as those excellent Writings which they left behind them renders it palpable to any body of near the half of that sobriety and discretion which highly recommended them. But these light and wild extravagants, tho they are but the very dregs and feculency of Mankind, on the account of either their *birth*, or *breeding*; yet they are especially *so*, because of their very souls and immoralities; as being such a herd of dull, and untractable, and whining, and debaucht Animals, as scarcely go beyond those of the Hoggs and Goats, which ever any of them was only born for to attend.

4. Secondly, The Apostles did not precipitantly embark themselves into such a design, without sufficient foresight of what hazards and difficulties were to be its concomitants: but they were throughly ascertain'd before-hand of what was awaiting

awaiting them: so that not only the Sufferings themselves in *general*, which they were to undergo, but the very manner and circumstances of severals of them in *particular*, were infallibly foretold them by him, whom in *them* they were to resemble; and they knew that they were so: as *Matth. ch.* 10. *ver.* 16. to 39. *ch.* 16. *ver.* 24, 25. *Luk. ch.* 14. *ver.* 26. to 33. *Joh ch.* 13. *ver.* 19. *ch.* 16. *ver.* 1, 2, 3, 4. *ch.* 21. *ver.* 18, 19. But as for these desperado Whigs, I doubt it shrewdly if they would be so ready to engage in their distraction, did they certainly foresee what would be the event of it: else why would they so skulk up and down, and lurk in such dark Caverns and Holes, as they think the most diligent search of the whole Kingdom shall never be able to find them out? Sure a method very much different from that of the Apostles, who were seldome, if ever found to decline the very greatest hazard that could threaten them. Thus *Act. ch.* 5. *ver.* 17. to 21. the Angel of the Lord had no sooner releas'd them out of that

Prison,

Prison, wherein they had been cast to be kept them unto the most severe trial that their no less *powerful*, than *enraged* enemies could subject them unto; when they *entered again into the Temple early in the next morning, and taught*. Now these people having once launcht out into that Ocean of Vanity and Delusion, they are resolv'd in spight of all the boisterous and thundering storms which can befall them, still to hold up something like a stiff and ungyielding Sail, and brave it out to the very uttermost. And that they should do so, is no great matter for wonder, if it be consider'd,

5. Thirdly, that those things of which they are so very tenacious, are such, wherein they are much more liable to be deceiv'd and impos'd upon, than were the Apostles to be in *those* wherefore they laid down their lives. Because all that they die for, is but the meer figment and opinion of their own distempered and raving Brains, the product of some fermented *Enthusiastick* temper. Whereas the Apostles did sustain all their sufferings upon

upon the account of what they affirm'd they had *heard and seen*. And every body knows that, in this frail estate wherein Man lies now a-grovelling, there is not the ten thousand part of that hazard for his *Outward* Senses to be seduc'd and deluded by their proper Objects, that there is for his *inward* to be so by theirs. Let it now be suppos'd that they are really deceiv'd and betrayed by their own heated Imaginations and Phancies (as I have the charity to think that they are, otherwise I behoved to look upon them as possest with something worse than meer madness, or simple distraction, when as *wittingly* as *willingly* they would so destroy themselves); then they cannot but be prompted to adhere unto those their conceits, by all the influence that a real Perswasion uses to have upon Men: and the Matter, wherein *these* happens to fall, being of the highest importance, and such as overpoizes the most valuable consideration of any thing on this side Eternity, they must by consequence undergo for them what ever *that* in the general does

oblidge

oblidge any to endure. But the Apostles, as they cannot be presum'd to have been cheated by their Senses, so neither can they be constructed any wise capable (naturally speaking,) to have so held out unto the end, and persever'd in their constancy, notwithstanding all that Cruelty it selfe could do to shake and brangle it, had they indeed been so. And therefore for them to have suffered so much for what they did testifie, was proportionably as much stronger an Argument in behalf of its being true, than any that can be deduc'd from the Sufferings (I should have said Punishments) of these demented and pitiful Fanaticks, for their Dreams and Visions; as the certainty which Those deriv'd from their Senses did transcend what These borrow only from their meerest *Putarem* and fanciful conjecture. And how much that was, they must be altogether senseless, who do not understand.

6. But lastly, what is it that either these, or any other Sect that ever was under the Cope of Heaven, have been ever ed

ed with, that can come in competition with what the Apostles and their followers (whom interpretatively I take in with them, all along these two last Sections) did endure? Has their tortures been as violent, and as lasting too, as was theirs? Has their deaths been as cruel and barbarous, as were those which they went through? No surely. The most that all such use to be punisht withal, is but what the Laws of every Nation directs against the disturbers of its Peace and Government: So that the worst was to be hung over a Ladder, or for ones neck to be ty'd to a Beam, and then have a Sledge driven out under him. And is this the first time that Melancholy has made men hang themselves? Or is that sufficient to draw the parallel with all that, which the first Paragraph of the last Section did exhibite to us anent the sufferings of the Apostles? And thus we see in these four instances (in all which, cumulatively taken, at least, I defie any man to give the exact similitude) how much they wrong and reproach themselves, as well as the blessed

Apostles

Apoſtles of Jesus Christ, who would rank Them aud thoſe *ſufferings* which they under-went for the ſake of his Goſpel, together with ſuch a deſpicable pack of infatuated Fanaticks, and thoſe *inflictions* which their obſtinate crimes and folly does even extort from the ſlow hands of reluctant Juſtice.

7. And now we have gone through thoſe ſeveral reſpects whereupon the Apoſtles did moſt punctualy reduce unto their practice thoſe advantages, which their Lord did beſtow upon them, for peculiarly qualifying them to be ſuch unto him; in ſo far, to wit, as they concern that credit and authority whereby they were to be reconcil'd to the repute and eſteem of the World. And indeed I make not the leaſt doubt, that, if the matter of Fact were once condeſcended upon, and if all that has been ſaid, both as to what did vouch the Holy Jesus himſelf, and thoſe his holy Apoſtles, were duely and ſeriouſly ponder'd and conſidered, the verity of the Chriſtian Religion would ſo demonſtratively appear, that the next

Paradox we might expect from those who would then deny it, not only to be True, but even to be *demonstratively* so, could be no less than that the Mathematicks themselves knew never any thing that merited to go under that name. And the very event confirm'd this: It being quite impossible, that so many Millions and Myriads of Men, of all kinds of Humors, and Interests, and Religions, and Learning, could have ever been prevail'd upon to embrace a new Religion, of such a constitution and circumstances, without something more clear and irradiant than the very Noon-days brightness, even to dazle them into a conviction of it; as the eleventh and twelfth Sections did before palpably make it to appear. So that if it had been the counsel and work of Man, it could not but have come to nought, as *Gamaliel* did rationally dispute it, *Acts* chap. 5. v. 38, 39. Thus *their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.* Rom. chap. 10. ver. 13. Thus *they grounded and settled the Faith, and the hope of the Gospel, and preacht it to every*

*every creature which is under heaven.* Col. chap. 1. ver. 28.

## Section XXI.

1. BUT they were not more faithful in Preaching and eſtabliſhing it in all *places*, than they were to tranſmit and propagate it to all ſucceeding *times*. And therefore that it might not die with themſelves, they did communicate unto others the *ſubſtantial* and *laſting* Power, confer'd upon them by their Maſter; thereby conſtituting them Apoſtles too, ſtill to maintain and uphold what they had once put into Being. And ſo they ordain'd Guides and Officers in the Church, to inſtruct the People in the Principles and Duties of their Chriſtian Profeſſion, and to adminiſter unto them thoſe holy Sacraments whereby they were to be *initiated* and *ſtrengthned* into it; and to convey the ſame Power unto others, to ſucceed them in the ſame Office, even unto the end of all things; ſo that, notwithſtanding their bodily deaths, their *power* and *function*

liv'd immortal in their conſecrated ſucceſſion. Thus St. *Paul* exhorts his beloved *Timothy* (2 epiſt. ch. 2. v. 2.), *And the things that thou haſt heard of me among many witneſſes, the ſame commit thou to faithful men, who ſhall be able to teach others alſo.* And beſides their having thus deriv'd the Chriſtian Religion unto, and entail'd it upon ſuch as might ſtill preſerve and keep it up in the World; they committed the moſt material and concerning part, if not the whole, of it unto Writing. Thus they left to poſterity an immediate and authentick account of the Life and Doctrine and Miracles of their great and bleſſed LORD and SAVIOUR, even in a quadruple Record, to recommend it the more by the unanimous relation of ſo many Witneſſes, and prevent all poſſible defects or miſtakes in the fuller and true Narrative of it. They wrote alſo the Hiſtory of the Acts of the Apoſtles, and of the firſt progreſs and advancement of Chriſtianity from its native *Jeruſalem* unto all the moſt conſiderable parts of the habitable earth. And ſeve-

rals

rals of them, especially St. *Paul*, did compose most divine and inspir'd Epistles to *explain* and *assert* the Christian Faith, and vindicate it from those Heresies which were assaulting, or like to assault it. And last of all, the Divine St. *John* bequeath'd a Book of Revelation, to give the Church some hint of what it was to meet with in all its several Periods and Stages, and what was to come in the last dayes of the World, and *before*, and *at* the second appearing of the Son of Man. Thus carefully did they look to the propagation of that Holy Religion, upon which, not only their own, but the hopes of all mankind were depending; and whereto they had devoted themselves, Souls, and Bodies, and Interests, with the most exuberant zeal and affectionate concernment.

2. And if they were so very faithful in relation to the Object, surely they were no less in reference to the Subject Matter of their Commission; since the one does necessarily follow the other: and the having been at the pains to disseminate the Gospel unto all the Race of Mankind,

evidently infers the having also made a compleat and full delivery of whatever belonging to it was imparted unto them by CHRIST or his Holy Spirit. For to what purpose should they have been at so much toil and trouble that they might plant Christianity among men, if yet they had counteracted themselves by such a nigardly distribution of it, as had render'd that which they had dispens'd, ineffectual and useless, by the want of some other things *as considerable*, which they had kept up and detain'd. Hence St. *Paul* professed that he had *kept back* nothing that was profitable for his Proselytes (*Act. ch.* 20. *ver.* 20.): and therefore he takes them to *record that he was pure from the blood of all men, for he had not shunned to declare unto them all the counsel of God* (ver. 26, 27.); and yet once before he parts with them, he tells them, that he has *shewed them all things*, (ver. 35.). Nay so far was he from reserving any part of that Doctrine wherein the Salvation of any did consist, that he even stoopt unto all the mean and humble con-

descentions

deſcentions imaginable, that he might thereby have occaſion to inſinuat and even ſcrew it in into every body he could get but any wiſe accoaſted; being *made ſervant to all, that he might gain the more, and made all things to all men, that he might by all means ſave ſome.* 1 Cor. chap. 9. ver. 19, to 22. Neither could any conſideration whatſoever be able enough to damp or ſuborn him from freely expreſſing the mind of his Lord, even to the laſt Iotta of it, as *being bold in God to ſpeak his Goſpel with much contention*; and ſo *he ſpoke it, not as pleaſing men, but God, which tryeth the hearts, ſince he was allowed of him to be put in truſt with it.* 1 Theſſ. chap 2. ver. 2. to 6. So that, as himſelf ſayes, (and *he ſpoke the truth in Chriſt, and lied not*), *he was ordained to be a Preacher, and an Apoſtle, a Teacher among the Gentiles in faith and verity.* (1 Tim. chap. 2. ver. 7.) And ſo there is not the leaſt ſhadow left us for doubting about the *entireneſs* and *perfection* of that faith, which the Apoſtles did communicate to the World

World in the name of Christ Jesus, when One of them had done it so abundantly himself alone.

## Section XXII.

1. THERE remains now only one Propriety of the Apostolical preaching to be taken notice of; and that is, the *plainness* and *ingenuous simplicity* of it, without which all the rest had been equally impertinent and needless. For had they wrapt and folded up their Doctrine in any ambiguous or ænigmatical terms, they might indeed have *amus'd* and *perplext* the world, but sure they had never done any thing to have *better'd* or *improv'd* it. And to have environ'd their Mount, as was *Sinai*, with the gloomy shade of impenetrable Clouds and thickest Darkness, might perhaps have made the gazing people at the border of it stand astonish'd in the sullen demurre of some awful dreadure and reverence; but had never permitted any, save it had an *inspired Moses*, break through and be-

behold the glory of the Lord residing there. So that had they not clearly and openly reveal'd those Divine Truths which concern the Salvation of Mankind; they had but serv'd it at the same, if not worse rate, at which *Delphos* was wont to treat its Votaries, by bellowing them out such mysterious Responses, as ever *confounded all*, but seldom *advantag'd any* of them: or at least have but given a second Edition of that mystical Theologie which had been so darkly adumbrated by the Sybils, as that the very Ink with which they wrote it, was scarcely black enough to be embleme unto that deepest shadow wherewith it was muffl'd up and obscur'd. And so their Divinity had been but still heathen as to that; when it had been still as little intelligible and obvious, as any that ever past under that name. It was therefore reserv'd to be the great glory and excellency of the Christian Religion, to expresse all its Doctrine and Oracles with such genuine perspicuity and distinctnesse, as that none could innocently remain *ignorant* or *mis-*

*take*

take of its meaning; or needed so much to exercise their Sagacity as their Faith, in their search and scrutiny after it.

2. And in that consisted one great preheminence which it carried, not only over the Theology of the Gentiles, but even over the Jewish Institution too. For, as the Apostle himself argueth it (2 Cor. chap. 3. ver. 7, 8, 9, 11.), *if the ministration of Death, which was engraven on Stones, was glorious*, or perspicuous (as he himself supposes it was, and as it was shewen to be from the fifth to the ninth Section), *which glory was to be done away; how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of Condemnation be glory, much more doth the Ministration of Righteousness exceed in glory; and if that which was done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is so.* Hence he infers (ver. 12, 16, 18.) *Seing then we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech; and the Vail being taken away, we all with open face, behold as in a Glass the glory of the Lord, and are changed into the same Image*

*image, from glory, to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord*; or even as if every particular one had been himſelf immediately inſpir'd from above. Therefore in the beginning of the next Chapter he continues thus, *If our Goſpel be hid, it is hid to them that are loſt*; (to wit through their own fault), *in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, leſt the light of the glorious Goſpel of Chriſt ſhould ſhine unto them: for God who commanded the light to ſhine out of darkneſs, hath ſhined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jeſus Chriſt.* ver. 1. to 6. This paſſage is ſo very plain, for the *plainneſs* of the Goſpell that it quite ſuperſedes the need of quoting any moe of thoſe many, which to this ſame purpoſe are to be found in every page of the New Teſtament. Only we muſt yet adduce the Teſtimony of the Old too, it having its own ſelf Propheſied how vaſtly it was to be outdone in *this* by what was equally to *evacuate*, and *ſucceed* it. *The light of the*

Moon

*Moon shall be as the light of the Sun, and the light of the Sun shall be seven fold, as the light of seven dayes, in the day that the* LORD *bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroak of their wound*; sayes *Isaiah*, chap. 30. ver. 26. And no lesse expresse was *Jeremiah*, chap. 31. to 34. *Behold*, sayes he, *the dayes come, saith the* LORD, *that I will make a new Covenant with the house of Israel and Judah, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and I will be their* GOD, *and they shall be my people; and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord.* And the exact accomplishment of this we learn from the *Hebrews*, chap. 8. ver. 11. Now if the Dispensation of the *Jews* was so very pat and distinct in every thing that belong'd, not only to their Worship and Manners, but even their Faith too (considering what allowance is to be given upon the account of their having

ving only awaited the glory of their *Israel*, and those dayes wherin the Vision and Prophecy was to be seal'd up); as it was evidenc'd to have been in the Sections that last were cited: then how infinitly *punctual* and *express* must be the Christian, which so far does exceed and transcend it? *Since even that which was made glorious, had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth*, as the Apostle draweth the consequence, 2 Cor. chap. 3. ver. 10.

3. But that there be no mistake here, we must remark that the comparison is not so much founded upon that evidence, whereby the real and certain *being* and *existence* of these two Revelations was made manifest, when in that the Jewish could hardly be overcome, but only upon the evidence, or clear and perspicuous discovery of the *nature* of those things themselves which were reveal'd. And it was as palpable and clear to any Jew that God gave the Law upon the Mount, as it was to any Christian that JESUS CHRIST was sent by God, and

was

was God himself with us, and the true Messiah; the Credentials which Attested the one being as little lyable to be disputed, as what did witnesse the other. But the difference was in this, that neither the Mosaical Typs and Prefigurations, nor yet the Predictions and Auguries of the Prophets did so perspicuously hold out and reveal the Messiah, and those mysteries which were with himself to be published unto the world, as did the discoveries which himself and his Apostles made of them afterwards; as is beyond all exception most evidently certain. So that tho the light they enjoyed was no Meridian, but as S. *John* speakes (ch. 1. ver. 5.) *a light shining in darkness, which comprehended it not*, and therefore did not so clearly illustrate those objects of which it gave them but a darker view, yet they had as good ground to be assur'd that they did certainly behold it; as if it had been never so much fulgent with the most glaring, and conspicuous reluctancy that did afterwards appear. As every body doubtes as little, that the

day has broke when he sees the dawn has quite dispell'd the blackness of those melancholy shades which benighted the Horizon, as that the indefatigably posting Sun has climb'd the steepest path to his equally Coruscant and Triumphing Noon, when he darrs hardly lift up an eye to look him in the dazling face there: tho his Earlier Shine cannot so brightly illuminate and adorn the Azure Welkine wherein he drives his Career, nor the inferiour Regions which own all their beauty and lustre to his refreshing glances; as can those advanced beams which are impartially diffus'd from his loftiest Throne unto the very crispled fringes of that hovering Sky that borders the irradiated Hemisphere. Or, as (to touch the other similitude of the Prophet) none who sies the fainter light of the pale and silver Moon sweetly mingled with the yet fainter twinklings of those remoter Stars which stude and sparkle the darkned Firmament, scruples more that it Lanthorns the World in the absence of its greater and original Luminarie,

narie, than that it is clearlier enlightned by This, when he beholds its fully resplendent and naifest Rays pleasantly to enamel the glistering and furbished Heavens with their liveliest paint and brightnesse: tho the one cannot so well serve him, as can the other, for prying into all the little screws and revolutions of some curious and delicate Machine; or reading the smallest Characters and Draughts, which in a narrower volumn comprizes the whole Book of the Heavenly Oracles. By all which it appears, both that the Jewes had little (if any thing at all) less evidence, that the Revelation communicated unto them did really proceed from God; than have the Christians, that he was the true Author of theirs: and also, that even the very same things which were imparted by both the Revelations, were done *so*, as much more clearly by the *latter*, than by the *former*, as proportionally the light of the *Sun* does exceed that of the *Moon*, and the radiancy of seven dayes that of only one.

SECT.

## SECTION XXIII.

1. IT is true S. *Paul* tells us (1 Cor. chap. 2. ver. 7.) that *they ſpoke the wiſdom of God in a myſtery, even the hidden wiſdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory.* And he makes mention of his *preaching among the Gentiles the unſearchable riches of Chriſt*, Eph. ch. 8. ver. 8. But a thing may be ſaid to be *myſterious*, and *hidden*, and *unſearchable*; accordingly as its *being* ſuch or ſuch a thing, or the *manner of its being ſo*, is darkly and obſcurely expreſt. For nothing can be abſolutely called ſo, or in its own ſelf, without reſpect to the powers and faculties converſant about it. Becauſe there can be no *Objective*, either *myſteriouſneſs*, or *evidence*, abſolutely taken, without regard to ſome *Subjective one*, or another. Juſt as a ſmall point cannot be called abſolutely viſible, or inviſible; ſince it is both capable to be diſcerned by a younger eye, and alſo not capable to be ſo, by one that has ſeen

fourſcore. Even ſo there are truths evident to a greater Maſter, which are quite myſterious to his Diſciple and Scholar; but eſpecially there are ſuch, as are clearly and diſtinctly penetrated by GOD, Angels, and Saints, which yet do wholly tranſcend the moſt refin'd Wit of us poor ſhallow Mortals. And ſo at that rate, every thing that were but true, even the Trinity it ſelf, behov'd to be ob-objectively evident alſo; and yet objectively obſcure too: when there is no poſſible Propoſition, that is not falſe, or of a contingent verity, but whoſe Terms are clearly connected in the ſight of ſome Underſtanding, Gods at leaſt; as on the contrary there is none ſo evident to any, but what perhaps might be not ſo, unto ſome Intellect, which the infinite potentiality of defect below that does contain. However, it cannot but be acknowledged that ſome truths are, either in themſelves more apportion'd unto the uptaking of weaker capacities, or elſe more condeſcendingly expreſt unto them, than others are. And if that be to be

ob-

objectively *evident*, then that is mostly so, which appears unto the lowest and weaker Understandings: although absolutely speaking, every truth comparatively to the faculty proportion'd to discern it, is equally evident with any other that needs not so advanc'd an acuteneſſe. And objectively *myſterious* or *obſcure* is just the contrary. But still it is clear that if we would generally call a thing objectively evident, or obſcure, we muſt before aſſign ſuch a degree of Intellection, in reſpect of which, it is either. And ſo all the *evidence* or *obſcurity* of a thing conſiſts in the manner of expreſſing it to ſuch or ſuch a perſon: which has nothing of abſoluteneſſe in it at all. Now there being a great difference betwixt the *beeing*, and the *manner of the beeing* of a *thing*, either of theſe may be evident, or *myſterious*, accordingly as they are *ſo* expreſt. And the *firſt*, being ſufficiently atteſted, without a clear diſcovery of the *ſecond*, is properly and only the Object of Faith; but *both*, being diſtinctly

understood, are *that* of Science and full comprehension.

2. Now tho the Christian Religion does contain in it many sublime and profound Mysteries, such as even *Angels desire to look into*; yet the most abstruse and recondite of them all, are perspicuously enough revealed, in so far as concerns the apprehensions of Faith, and as the meer *being*, without the *manner of the being of them*, is discovered unto us. Thus tho the Trinity, for example, be not so fully made manifest, as that we may clearly understand, how one Essence can be really three Persons, how one Person, which is really the same with the Essence of another Person, should really proceed from that other Person, and how the Person should proceed, and ye the Essence which is Identified with it should not proceed also; tho these I say, be wholly unfathomable by the most subtile and pregnant understandings that ever any mortal was endowed withal; yet none will doubt but there is enough of them reveal'd for informing our Faith what to believe anent that

that deep and heavenly Myſtery it ſelf. And St. *Paul* himſelf clears all this by that elegant *ſeeming* contradiction where-with he enticed the *Epheſians to know the love of Chriſt which paſſeth knowledge* (Eph. ch. 3. ver. 19.): it not being more reconcil'd by what is ſaid, than it does palpably confirm and atteſt it. And ſo it follows equally, that the Goſpel is not myſteriouſly reveal'd, and that notwithſtanding all that revelation it is ſtill a Myſtery.

3. And indeed it behov'd to have been ſo; unleſs our LORD and SAVIOUR had come to convert our Earth unto Heaven, to leave us no room for Faith, but foreſtal and anticipate the Beatifical Viſion by the entire manifeſtation of thoſe ſublime and lofty Myſteries, which are to be known there, when *we ſhall ſee God himſelf* (in whom all that is myſterious is concenter'd, and will be laid open) *face to face, and know him as we ſhall be known of him* (1 Cor. ch. 13. ver. 12.), *and ſhall ſee him as he is* (1 Joh. chap. 3. ver. 2.), and ſo leave us nothing to ex-

pect more beyond this life, ſave it were a new reiteration of its own ſelf, and that knowledge we enjoy'd in it. Which had quite confounded the method and wiſdome of his Providence toward us, by affording us the Prize before we had run the Race; and *ſuperſeding*, nay *impoſſibilitating* that rational and free obedience whereby he deſign'd his own Glory; the full fruition of GOD (which had inevitably followed upon ſuch a knowledge, at leaſt we are not able to underſtand how he can be any otherwiſe poſſeſt even in Heaven) not being conſiſtent with any of thoſe frail declenſions which muſt be *ſuppoſable* for enhancing and *worthying* the contrary Vertue and Obſequiouſneſs.

4. These ſupernatural truths then were revealed unto us, to raiſe our admiration of, and gratitude for, the as boundleſs as inconceivable Goodneſs, and Mercy, and Love, and Power, and Juſtice, and Wiſdom of that infinitely gracious Deity, whoſe every Attribute has ſeem'd to be at a vye with its fellows, how to exert it ſelf the moſt ſignally in the wonderful contrivance

trivance of our Redemption by the Incarnation and Death of his only begotton Son. And the revelation of them was ſo allayed and tempered, to exerciſe our Faith and Veneration, and not our Curioſity and Invention: to make us ſenſible of what incommenſurable diſtance is between our GOD and us, and ſo ſuppreſs thoſe vain tourings and elations whereinto our overweening and ſaucy Reaſon is but too apt to ſwell and aſpire; to leave us under ſuch a proportion'd and moderated light of thoſe higheſt Myſteries, as might be enough, only to *enviorate* and *conduct*, and not to *ſcorch* and *dazle* our ſouls, only to *influence* and gently *move*, & not *overwhelm* and *neceſſitate*, or (which is the very ſame) *compell* and *force* our obedience; and to engage our prayers and induſtry in the ſufficient ſearch of thoſe as *concerning* as *ſublime* Points, but not our bold and adventurous flights at whatever is ſacred or difficult, our petulant and preſumptuous ſcrutinies into the Divine Cabinet of thoſe ſecret Councils, which have been lockt up from all Ages and Generations.

SECT.

## Section XXIV.

1. AS for those dry and Theoretical Disquisitions which have no peculiar regard unto the life and conversation, and do only imploy some strain'd Wit, and Metaphysical Learning, and wherein Christianity can hardly be interessed, save to disparage and condemn the over fond industry that may be wasted in the pursuit of them; as to these indeed the Gospel is very mysterious, nay and *silent* on all respects whatsoever. It is true the idle and vain curiosity of too many, leads them to relish no delight more, than what they take in ransacking of dark corners and secrets, and unbowelling of all the troublesome puzzles and perplexities that any cryptical riddle or intrigue can amuse them withal. Neither can they be so indefatigable in any study or endeavour, as that which searches the many thorny mazes and windings, the little intricacies and labyrinths of those shaddy Groves and Recesses, wherein they imagine

gine any uncommon or yet unfound *knack* or *ſpeculation* lies hid and obſcure: Nay they'll ſit down pettiſh and melancholly, if they think they have ſlipt but one Cranny or Chink, even of Infinity it ſelf, not ſufficiently pry'd and inquir'd into, and have not quite fathom'd the profoundeſt Abyſs of its verieſt engulphing Myſteries and deepneſſes, with the *ſubtile*, tho never ſo *ſhort* Line of their ſhallow Underſtandings; and thus riffl'd GOD himſelf of all his moſt tranſcending and peculiar Wiſdom and Knowledge. But our Saviours Errand to the World had a more *generous* and *concerning* deſign, than thus to humour the mean and aery Genius of ſuch impertinently ſilly, as well as buſie people; or to teach a few Pedantick Muſty Souls how to ſpin Cob-webs and the like fanciful Textures out of their own working Nodles, and evaporated frothy Brains. No certainly.

2. For *the grace of God that bringeth ſalvation, hath appeared to all men*, only in order *to teach us, that denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly*

*righteously and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*: his main business among men being, that *he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purifie unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works* (Tit. chap. 2. ver. 11. to 14.). And so the *end of our faith being the salvation of our souls* (1 Pet. chap. 1. ver. 9.), he reveal'd nothing to us for *that*, but what had of its self some *special* aptitude and *intrinsick* tendency, as a mean, to compass, and dispose for, this end: every particular Article being *naturally* productive of some *correspondent* vertue, and the complex of the *whole* immediatly influencing us to that universal holiness *in all manner of conversation*, which can only adapt and prepare us for those purest and divine Joys, those crystal rivers of Pleasures, wherein Sensuality (even that which is most Metaphysical) can relish no smack nor satisfaction, and which are not capable to yield any acceptable gusto, but unto the refin'd and delicate taste of a *pious* and

*devout*,

*devout*, and not of a meerly *curious* and *speculative* Soul.

3. And ſure it had been infinitely *below* and *unworthy* him to have entertain'd the World with thoſe triffling and empty notions, which only flutter up and down about divine matters, and have no reſpect to the bettering of Mens lives, when he *had his Fathers buſineſs to be about* (Luk. chap. 2. ver. 49.), and to teach Mankind thoſe ſolid and prolifick Truths, which might impregnate, not the *Head* with thin and ſprightly Niceties, but the *Heart* and Life with ſubſtantial Goodneſs and Vertue: that being the only way to ſecure it both of the *preſent* and *future* felicity, and to *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things* (Titus ch. 2. v. 10.). Wherefore as all thoſe jejune and barren ſpeculations are in themſelves altogether uncapable to work upon practice, or employ any thing of us below the Chin, (have it be in thoſe ebullitions of contention and ſtrife which they are indeed *very* and *only* apt to occaſion); ſo were they wholly left out of our Saviours Care and Miniſtry,

Miniſtry; theſe being mainly bent to introduce all *ſorts* and *degrees* of Vertue, and Goodneſs and Righteouſneſs, and a good Conſcience towards GOD and toward Man, into the World; and not any of thoſe whimſical and wandring contemplations, thoſe abſtracted and rarified Phancies, which might idly buſie, and ſeriouſly let People a trifling, if not fighting; ſtill affording plentiful occaſion enough for peeviſh quarrels and ſquablings; but would not bring in any real acqueſt worth the thouſand part of that labour and toil which was expended in the purſuit of them.

4. It was not therefore without ground that the Apoſtle was ſo ſevere to ſuch *foolish queſtions*; *and fables which miniſter queſtions, rather than godly edifying, which is in faith* (Titus ch. 3. v. 9. and 1 Tit. chap. 1. ver. 4.); and charged *Timothy* (1 Epiſt. chap. 4. ver. 7.) to *refuſe profane fables, but exerciſe himſelf unto godlineſs*; giving him (*chap. 6. ver. 3, 4, 5.*) the true character of thoſe, *who conſent not to wholeſome words, even the words o.*

*our*

*our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and to the doctrine which is according to godlineſs*; nay, and telling him (2 Epiſt. chap. 2. ver. 16.) that *ſuch profane and vain bablings*, are ſo far from *advancing* Godlineſs, that on the contrary *they increaſe unto more ungodlineſs*. And in his Epiſtle to the *Epheſians* (chap. 5. ver. 6, 8, 9, 10.) he cautions them to *let no man deceive them with vain words*; *for they were ſometime darkneſs, but now are light*; and ſo he deſires them to *walk as children of the light*; and he ſhews them how to do ſo, by *proving what is acceptable to the Lord, for the fruit of the Spirit is all goodneſs, and righteouſneſs, and truth*. And ſo in that to the *Coloſſians* (chap. 1. ver. 27.) he informs them what is the wiſdom and deſign of the preaching of Chriſt; *whom we preach*, ſaith he, *warning every man, and teaching every man in all wiſdom, that we may preſent every man in Chriſt Jeſus*. And any may read in his ſecond Chapter of that ſame Epiſtle, eſpecially from the ſecond to the eleventh Verſe, wherefore he injoyns them to *beware leſt any man ſpoil them through Philoſophy*

*ſophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the Rudiments of the world, and not after Chriſt; in whom dwelleth all the fulneſs of the Godhead bodily, and are hid all the treaſures of* (True, becauſe *Practical*) *wiſdom and knowledge.* Sure an advice which the World has not yet been ſo wiſe and good as to out-date. In a word then, our bleſſed Lord, who came here away only to deſtroy the *work* of the Devil, made it never his *own* to meddle with thoſe airy and fruitleſs ſpeculations, or any thing elſe that could not ſerve to promote and further a vertuous and holy life; that being, as the only *worthy*, ſo the only *proportionable* aim of all his Doctrine; as is to be ſeen thorow-out all the Writings of the New Teſtament. But whatever was neceſſary, or yet requiſite for the advancing of *that*, and reſtoring again that Image of himſelf which was defac'd by the Fall; that he fail'd not to make ſufficiently manifeſt, ſo as that he that runneth might read it. And as more had been ſuperfluous, nay even dange-

rous

rous and deſtructive; ſo was that abundantly *enough* and *expedient*.

## Section XXV.

1. BUT on the other hand, none muſt think that thoſe neceſſary and Eſſential Points of the Chriſtian Religion, which were ſo plainly reveal'd to the World, ought to be taken in ſo ſtrict a ſenſe, as retrenches them only to ſome few Articles, or but one perchance, which may be ſufficient for ſome perſons, of ſuch weak capacities, and in ſuch bad circumſtances, as that, morally ſpeaking, they are not able to conceive, or learn any moe; and ſo as are requir'd only in the worſt circumſtances, and moſt imperfect condition wherein any man that is but ſo much as Chriſtian is capable to lie a grovelling. For whatever elſe might be in ſuch an Error, yet certainly there are few of a more pernicious Conſequence, in ſo far as concerns the Practice and Converſations of Men, than is it; ſince the moſt part are not ordinarily of that generous

mould and temper, as to buſie themſelves with any other things in Religion, than thoſe, which they look upon as altogether indiſpenſible for them. And ſo when they reckon none for ſuch, but what the ſhalloweſt Plebeian ought not to be ignorant of, it is but to be even to themſelves to take up there, and neglect all others, as what were only ordain'd for the Schools, and thoſe whoſe peculiar Trade it would be to ſtudy them. This ſure is a miſtake ſo dangerous, that hardly any pains can be more worth the while, than thoſe which may detect and lay it open. And for the better doing of that, we muſt take notice of a diſtinction which the Neceſſaries do commonly fall under.

2. And that is, as they import an *abſolute* and *intrinſick*, or only an *extrinſick* and *reſpective* neceſſity. In that ſenſe, every thing is neceſſary, which of its own ſelf has an intrinſick tendency to beget thoſe holy diſpoſitions in men, whereby they can only be adapted for Salvation, and does not regard the circumſtances of any man in particular, but

but only of Mankind in groſs. In this, all thoſe are ſuch, that are ſufficiently propoſ'd by GOD, whatever be the matter they contain; becoming only *ſo* by vertue of *the general account of Faith*, and *formal Reaſon* or *motive*, upon which it depends; when there are ſufficient means of conviction, reſpectively to ſuch and ſuch particular perſons, that ſuch and ſuch Truths are atteſted by that Infinite Veracity, which can neither be deceived it ſelf, nor yet deceive others; ſo as that they cannot reject them, but they muſt call the revealer a liar, or deny his Authority. And this by conſequence is to deny himſelf, and by a further conſequence to deny the Fundamental Article of all Religion: and ſo every *extrinſecally* neceſſary Point becomes at the rebound to be *intrinſecally* ſo; ſo long as the propoſal ſufficient for conviction does remain.

3. But it muſt be notic'd that even no abſolutely and intrinſecally Neceſſary Point can at all be accounted neceſſary to any particular perſon, before it has once become to be extrinſecally and reſpective-

ly ſo too. Since no Article can be any wiſe obligatory, before it be once ſo ſufficiently propoſ'd, as that it cannot be any longer disbelievʼd, without prevaricating againſt that obligation, which binds all men to yield their aſſent whenſoever there is ſufficient means for conviction that the Supream Veracity does exact it. And ſo every intrinſecally Neceſſary Article muſt be extrinſecally neceſſary likewiſe, or ſufficiently propoſ'd as reveal'd by GOD, in *general*, to all Mankind, and in *particular*, to the ſeveral Individuals of it; before that very intrinſick neceſſity with which it is ſo fraughted, can be ſo far actuate as to touch any body at all.

4. Yet when the Neceſſaries are treated with relation to the Diſpenſation of the Goſpel, and as they are clearly reveal'd by it for the Salvation of all men, this reſpective and extrinſick neceſſity ſhould never be ſo much as once thought upon. For ſince that reſpective neceſſity does ariſe from the ſeveral applications of that general Act of Faith, *the believing all that is atteſted by God*, unto particular objects, upon

upon *sufficient conviction* that they were so testified; there can be no certain general Rule to determine upon what matters that application falls, and so neither to determine what are invested with that necessity. For Because the Application of that general Rule unto any particular matter, depends necessarily upon the emergency of sufficient convictions in behalf of that particular; and these convictions do vary as much as the capacities and circumstances of particular persons, nay and many times are in two for both the extreams of the same contradiction (tho one must certainly labour under some deception or other); and so 'twere much easier to shape a Coat for the Moon, which might fit it in all the several places of the World at the same time, than contrive any such general Rule for such an application, and so for that respective necessity of which we talk. But here when we say that the Gospel is plain and clear in all the Necessaries, we take it for that general Rule according to which these are judged. And therefore we cannot mean of any respe-

ctive or extrinſick neceſſity when relatively to ſuch a Rule only we diſcourſe of them. Beſides were ſuch a neceſſity underſtood in that caſe, there were no more ſaid, but that the Goſpel was clear in ſuch neceſſaries, as it was clear in; or was clear, where it was clear; as is manifeſt: Since that reſpective neceſſity, involving all the convictions of thoſe upon whom it happens to fall, does but tautologize and repeat that clearneſs which was only ſo in reſpect of theſe convictions. And further, it is only the *Material* Object of Faith, or that *which* is believ'd, that is here conſidered, and not the *Formal*, or that *for which* the other is aſſented unto. Becauſe, when we are to examine what things the Goſpel can be ſaid to reveal clearly, the enquiry muſt fall allanerly upon the things themſelves as they are the Object of ſuch a perſpicuous Revelation; and ſo upon that which is only the *material Object* of Faith: ſince what is the Object of that clearneſs, is *ſuch* too. But whatever that reſpective neceſſity, as ſuch, does import, concerns not the

*material*

*material*, but peculiarly belongs to the *formal* Object, in ſo far as the means of conviction do ſo.

5. It is true that no *objective* or *abſolute* evidence or perſpicuity can be but ſo much as imagin'd without ſome regard to that which uſes to be called *ſubjective* and *reſpective*, as was ſhewed in *Sect.* 23. *Par.* 1. And ſo before any thing can be denominated to be objectively evident, there muſt be aſſign'd ſuch a degree of Intellection and ſubjective evidence in reſpect of which it is only ſo. But that *reſpective* evidence ought to correſpond to that thing which is of an *objective*, ſo, as that if the one be of a *general* conſideration, the other muſt be ſo too, and if of a *particular*, both muſt be of the ſame. Wherefore ſince the Goſpel, (as it is maintain'd to be evident and plain in the diſcovery of all thoſe Truths that are neceſſarily to be believ'd in order to the ſalvation of all men) cannot but be lookt upon under the firſt of *theſe* two, and as it has an equal aſpect to all thoſe men whoſe ſalvation is to be attain'd by it; therefore it muſt

be

be only plain and evident in regard of them *all* in *general*, without any partial reſpect to *any* of them at all in *particular*. And therefore that degree of conviction or ſubjective evidence which muſt be pitcht upon, that it may be ſaid to be objectively clear and manifeſt, muſt be ſuch, as may take in the whole ſpecies of Mankind, and be ſo general as not to have an eye more to any one, than to any other of them all. And this is it which we only do here intend.

6. Now that the Neceſſaries, as they are *abſolutely* and *intrinſecally* ſuch, cannot be confin'd into ſuch a narrow and ſtinted exception, as was expreſt in the beginning of the Section; but ſhould be extended to a far larger, comprehending, at leaſt, all ſuch Points, as are requiſite for all times, and circumſtances; either with reſpect to any whatſoever particular perſons, whether of weaker, or more improv'd Capacities; or elſe to whole Societies, or rather the whole Catholick Church; ſo as that nothing can lawfully excuſe or exempt any from the explicite

and distinct belief of the whole Systeme of such *Credenda*, but the *moral* and *sinless* impossibility of being able, either to understand and take them up, thorow the shallowness of weak Inducements, or to receive sufficient information and instruction of them, thorow the destitution of qualified and accomplished Teachers; whereas either the one, or the other disadvantage, would be abundant apology for the ignorance of most of them at least: that these Necessaries, I say, should be constructed to be of so large an extent, is to me so very evident and certain, that after the affair is sufficiently deliberated, I should much doubt of his ingenuity, who would say he did so with it. And that this may also be as manifest to all the World, I shall go on with these following Considerations;

7. First, God directs his Laws, not to this or that single Man in particular, but to all Men by the lump; so that, as they flow from him, they carry no peculiar intendment alongst with them, more for one, than for another. Otherwise he behov'd,

either

either immediatly to suggest his will to every individual of Mankind himself, or else to send out as many Messages to the World as it has Inhabitants. And how much that would confound the present Providence & Oeconomy whereby he will have the World to be governed, every body without the least assistance of any perspective cannot but discern.

8. Secondly then, All Mankind, taken absolutely and in the bulk, lies under the same equal obligation of doing the utmost that is morally possible, in performance of those Duties which their God and Creator requires of them. For under that consideration they are abstracted from all those several circumstances, which can only be suppos'd to vary the obligation of any one from *that* of any of the rest; and are lookt upon meerly as such Rational Creatures, of such a degree of perfection and advancement in those Powers and Faculties, whereby they are rendered to be such, as is *common* to the whole Species and Kind. And therefore every individual and single Man, as he is

one

one of such a Community, under that reduplication, is tyed to no more, nor no less, than every one of his fellows who with him combine to make it up, as they are members of it likewise. And if it were otherwise, there could not but be such a partiality in laying on the obligation upon those, who were bound to more, or less, than their neighbours; as any sooner than GOD might be imagin'd to have been the Imposer. Because there would be an *unequal exaction* from *equal capacities and circumstances*. Hence, had nothing interveen'd to have altered *these*, that had been certainly in Effect, which is now only in Scheme and Speculation. Neither is it conceiveable how any of the Progeny of *Adam* could have lain under any different incumbency from that which press'd upon himself, had he persever'd in that state of Innocence, which had entail'd these same equal advantages upon his Off-spring, wherewith GOD had then blist him.

9. But Sin, the woful Author of all discord and confusion, having introdus'd such

ſuch a variety and diſcrepance among the induements and circumſtances of Men, as what is poſſible (*morally*, I mean always here) for one to perform, is altogether the contrary for another; Therefore Thirdly, Every particular perſon, under that regard, is peculiarly bound, *accordingly* as his circumſtances renders him capable to comply with that Obligation, which in the general is exacted from his whole Kind: ſo that every one, who makes the neareſt approach to that degree of natural perfection, which fals under the conſideration of being the Specifick whereby to difference his Kind from any other, and reſpectively to which ſuch an Obligation was impos'd, ought correſpondently to make ſuch an advance in his Obedience, as might the nearſteſt exhauſt that Obligation it ſelf. As on the other hand, however much or little ſhort any comes of it, yet if he did all that he was able to do, he muſt be underſtood to have as punctually acquit himſelf in his duty; as has he, who, furniſhed with proportionable advantages, did wholly

live up to the fulleſt excellency of that Obedience unto which all his Kind was engaged.

10. Yet Fourthly, He cannot owe his having done ſo unto the ſufficiency of that performance *abſolutely* and *materially* conſidered; for 'tis palpable that nothing leſs than the entireſt conformity unto the *common* Obligation could have been enough upon that account. Since any performance, whereby he could diſcharge himſelf of that obligation which lies upon him, if *abſolutely* and *materially* taken, muſt reſpect him only as diveſted of all thoſe ſeveral circumſtances whereby he is render'd a *particular* Perſon (unleſs, contrary to the firſt conſideration, there were a particular Law ſuppos'd to be promulgate for him allanerly); and ſo nothing leſs than ſo much as could ſuffice for him, as a Man, under an abſolute and general view, could on that head ſerve to do his turn. But thoſe languid and hinting aims did eſpecially derive more value from the ingenuous ſimplicity, and ill circumſtances wherein they were brought forth;

than

than any exactneſs and conformity unto that obligation which they clambered to fulfil. Wherefore it may be more vertuous for one to climb up but the very loweſt ſtep of Obedience, than for another to be towring upon the higheſt pinacle of it at all. Becauſe the Parts and Circumſtances of both being compar'd, there may be a greater diſproportion between *thoſe*, than between thoſe *material points* of their Duty which were performed by each of them. And ſo the ſufficiency and perfection of that *materially leſs perfect* Performance, is preciſely to be reſounded upon the circumſtances and qualifications of him by whom it was elicite; which, by how much worſe they are, do by ſo much enhance what was begot in and by them; recompenſing all the *material defect*, by the irreſervedneſs of all that they were capable of; an accompliſhment, which, formally notic'd, ceds not to the higheſt any can pretend to, when none can do more than he is able to do, and the doing all that, abundantly abſolves him. Thus was the Widows Mite rated,

upon

upon the ſcore of being her All, above the greater Oblations, that had no ſuch recommendation to ſet them off. And GOD never *reaps where he hath not ſown, but accepts according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not*, 2 Cor. 8. 12. It being as much contrary to his Juſtice, as it is to his Goodneſs, to task men with impoſſibilities, or thoſe things which himſelf knows tranſcends the utmoſt of their abilities to afford him.

12. Wherefore in the fifth place, it is to be notic'd that GOD, in the contrivance of our Salvation, did not deſign, at the ſending of his Son, to redintegrate again unto Mankind thoſe natural endowments which were cruſht by his Fall; or with an equal improvement to advance the Intellects of every one unto ſuch a degree of natural knowledge (for ſome muſt ſtill be preſuppos'd) as was moſt neceſſary and requiſite for receiving thoſe ſupernatural communications whereby the *Myſtery kept ſecret ſince the world began*, was more fully imparted to the whole Race, ſo as

that

that all ſhould be equally capable to penetrate and comprehend thoſe ſublime diſcoveries of it, which the brighteſt Rays of the *Day-ſpring from on High* ſo clearly did make. And ſo his bleſſed Son, when come to the World, did leave that already eſtabliſhed diſparity amongſt men (as much as to their Underſtandings, and the accompliſhments of them, as on any other reſpect whatſoever), which either the various Compoſure of their Bodies, or the diverſities of their education, occaſioned, in the ſame unaltered eſtate wherein it was before.

12. And therefore ſixthly, having publiſhed his Goſpel with an equal reſpect to all Mankind in general, he cannot be thought but to have adapted it only for the whole Maſs of ſuch Reaſonable Beeings; ſo as that, as it is *materially* taken, and with reſpect to *theſe*, there might not be any of never ſo favourable advantages which might not find exerciſe and employment enough for the utmoſt improvements and endeavours of them. And indeed ſince Providence has bleſt ſeverals with

ſuch

ſuch plentiful proviſions as exempt them from thoſe pinching ſtraits and neceſſities others groan and ſweat under, that what induſtry is ſpar'd their Bodies may be beſtowed in cultivating and exalting their Minds; it follows by all the Laws of Inference, that thoſe who are ſo ſever'd and diſcriminated from the Vulgar, ſhould not be let paſs with diſproportionable returns unto that Bounty which has ſo taken care of their ſubſiſtence, and eſpecially in thoſe Intellectual indowments, in which they ought to be as much qualified above the common ſize, as it is below thoſe peculiar bleſſings which ſo elevats them; it being all reaſon to expect their ſoaring higher, who are ſo freed from thoſe loads and weights which clogg and depreſs others. Neither could it ever be the deſign of him, who breath'd the *breath of life*, a Soul eſſentially *active* and *ſpiritual*, *into our noſtrils*, to ſurround any with thoſe competent advantages which afford leaſure in abundance from all the cumberſome entanglements of this World, meerly that they might indulge and dandle themſelves

themſelves in the oſcitant ſupine Yawnings of Idleneſs and Sloath, or pamper and tickle thoſe filthy Luſts and Senſualities, which can but bury the more Excellent and Divine Part of them in luxury and ſtench; as was ſhewed in the firſt Paragraph of the firſt Section. But when to theſe ſo comprehenſive bodily mercies, which afford both the freedom of an ingenious education, and alſo of employing that time which ſo abounds (there being no reaſonable tentation to waſte and proſtitute it with thoſe baſer ſcramblings which indigent perſons are forc'd unto) for thoſe excellent purpoſes for which ſo happy an Inſtitution does enable; when to theſe, I ſay, that tranſcendant ennoblement of all, a ſmart and pregnant Wit, able and brisk enough for the loftier flights in whatever Science or Contemplation, is ſuperadded; then the correſpondent acceſſion of a further compliance with that duty which all Men, as ſuch, are tyed unto, muſt certainly be devolv'd alſo. Becauſe that is a ſpecial graee of GOD too. Since the

Spirits

Spirits of Men are, by his particular assignment, who keeps the very *hairs of our heads in number, and lets none of them fall to the ground without him*, like that Ground mentioned in the Gospel, some whereof brought forth fruit at an hundred fold, some at sixty, some at thirty; so as that some of them are of that more polite and subtile constitution which is capable of the most acute and refin'd Improvements, whereas others are of so stubborn and untractable a Mould, as that hardly the most assiduous Husbandry can mellow them into any plyant or docile frame at all.

13. But on the other hand, the nobler study of the Mind requiring an undisturb'd vacancy from those servile Drudgeries wherein the generality of Men are immerst, and our mortal condition making these altogether necessary; it was but requisite that no higher qualifications or advances in Religion should have been exacted from the Vulgar and laborious Rank, than what rude and unfashioned Nature was capable to acquire; unless

he, who once was figured by Manna, ſhould at his appearance have ſuperſeded any further toil in the World, by the reiterated dayly ſhowers of that ancient Type of himſelf: and all this eſpecially, when ſuch peoples Souls uſe, for the moſt part, to be the fitteſt Gueſts that could readily have been lodged in ſuch thatched Cottages, as are their Bodies, no leſs, than thoſe Earthen-houſes wherein they ſhelter themſelves. And ſo there cannot any thing be deem'd more juſt and reaſonable, than that as GOD, on the one hand, ſtoops and *bowes down his Heavens* to the frailty and imperfections nece arly attending the weaker and needier ſort; ſo he ſhould, on the other, proportion his exactions by the good things which he has vouchſaft, according to the Parable of the Talents. Nay were it but to maintain his Reputation, and not (by ſuch a promiſcuous ſcattering of his Benefits without any regard where they were to fall, as no humane prudence would be guilty of) expoſe his Wiſdom unto the ſcorn and deriſion of his own Creatures,

nay

nay and of thoſe ſame who were partakers of the profuſion; he could not do otherwiſe: bnt behov'd to take as particular account of what he has diſpenſt, as was the providence by which he did it, and the deſign which that propos'd. And the great end for which he created Man being that himſelf might be glorified by his rational and vertuous Obedience, the principal deſign he can have in beſtowing any favours upon him, is certainly the better to fit and enable him to purſue and comply with that end; and ſo higher advancements in Religion are eſpecially the Debt which ſuch Receipts engage unto; becauſe theſe being chiefly the productions of the Soul, the more that is ennobled, the more it is to be prolifick in them.

14. From all which it clearly follows what in the ſixth place was laid down, *viz.* That CHRIST JESUS did ſo reveal his Goſpel with reſpect to all Mankind in General, as that there could not be any in it but it would afford him work enough for all the moſt ſignal advantages

that he could be capable to enjoy in this preſent World. Becauſe, if he had not done ſo, but had proportion'd the whole Syſteme of the *material object* of it unto the loweſt and meaneſt degree of the Parts and Circumſtances of thoſe who crawl among the vulgar and unpoliſhed Rabble, and ſo had exacted no more from thoſe who are happy in the more affluent diſtribution of the Comforts of Life, and endued with the more nimble and elevated Underſtandings, but to know ſo much, as thoſe others, ſo vaſtly below them upon either account; either all that has been ſaid in thoſe two laſt Paragraphs muſt fall quite down to the ground, and the ſurpluſage of thoſe peculiar advantages which ſo many triumph in above their Neighbours, were caſt away gratis, without any ſuitable retribution to be made for it; or elſe, as much contrary to what was premiſed in the ſeventh Paragraph, he had reſolv'd immediatly to inſpire every ſingle man by himſelf, and inform him of ſo much of that Religion whereby he could only

only be ſav'd, as would minutely correſpond with his *proper* and *reſpective* circumſtances, which required a *different* exaction from that whereunto others may be liable. I know none that ever held any thing like *this latter*, ſave it be the Quakers; and it is ſo far their own *private ſpirit* that ſuggeſts the fancy to them of ſuch a dream about *One*, that waking people who would be at the pains to refute them, might become to be ſuſpected of ſomething worſe than meerly to dream too. And as for the *former*, beſides what has been already ſaid in the general; what more unworthy could be imagin'd, than that none of all thoſe, who are as cloſely hedg'd & fenced about with all manner of bleſſings, even as the Devil ſaid *Job* was, ſhould not be obliged to have any more full and diſtinct knowledge of the infinite excellency of GOD, of the unſpeakable love he manifeſted to man in ſending his own eternally begotten Son to die for, and redeem him, of the ineffable conſubſtantiality of that Son with his Father, and Divinity of the Man

CHRIST JESUS, the great endearment of that mercy, nor of the various estates of Innocency, Misery, and Grace, which poor Man himself has been tost into, *&c.* than the most stupid and illiterate dunce, that gives something like ground enough to make it be scrupled, whether or not there be any middle species of Creatures betwixt Mankind and Beasts, that have the Body of the one, and no finer Soul than the Animal one of the other?

15. Whence seventhly, it is evident that, according to what was made out in the eighth Paragraph, every one in all Mankind is equally oblig'd with all the rest expressly to know no less extensive a Creed, than what was compos'd with regard to the whole Species; in so far, to wit, as he is denuded of all his circumstances, and considered meerly as a Man: tho as cloath'd with *these*, and if there be a readiness to will, or a willing mind, the performance out of that which every one hath, is smil'd upon and accepted by him, who *remembers that he is but flesh, a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again.*

So

So that rigorouſly ſpeaking, and meerly conſidering what belongs to the material Object of Faith intrinſecally relating to thoſe Diviner improvements which the Goſpel chiefly intends, there is no extent of it ſufficient for Salvation, theſe terms being generally taken, but what is *ſo* for one in the moſt exalted and advantagious condition unto which this mortal ſtate can poſſibly arrive. And therefore, as it was purſued in the tenth Paragraph, there is none who is ſav'd by leſs, but he is beholden for that, not altogether unto the ſufficiency of that part of the Chriſtian Faith, *abſolutely* and *materially* conſidered; but to the compaſſion and connivance of that GOD, who choos'd rather to overlook the narrowneſs of thoſe endeavours which flow from an ingenuous ſincerity, before he would alter that inequality in mens conditions and endowments, which could not have ſuffered a change, without the preſent Oeconomy of this World had endur'd One too.

6. Now let us ſubjoyn Eightly, That therefore the Neceſſary Faith for Salvation

tion as it is absolutely noticed without respect to this or that man in particular, must be taken in as ample a sense, as the sixth Paragraph did assign it: and that there can be no more prepostorous a method in handling this subject, than to begin at the lowest rank of men, in the worst circumstances they can be in as Christians, and, from what is resolv'd upon as sufficient to save them, conclude that there is no more necessary for the salvation of any, to wit, upon the account of that immediate Aspect unto the special and main end of the Divine Revelation, which discriminats a Necessary & Essential Point; and so to judge of all the rest of Christianity, from what is not so, as indifferent in its self, and whereto none is bound without the intervention of the meerest peradventure. Just so as if one were to distinguish betwixt Christian Vertue and Perfection (either *intensively* or *extensively* taken) that is necessary for Salvation upon the account of its intrinsick tendency to make one meet to be partaker of the Inheritance of the

Saints

Saints in Light, and only upon that of the Command of GOD promulgate with evidence enough to render it binding: He would, to determine precisely what *degree* or *extent* of Perfection is sufficient in the first respect, commence downwards, and, from what is found enough to prepare a mean rude Cobler or Shepherd for the being capable of Glory, thence infer, that so much, and no more, is required from any, in however advantagious circumstances, and of however sublime accomplishments; and therefore would cut off all other performances and more aspiring flights of Holiness and Love, from that nobler regard unto Heaven, which the Gospel mainly designs, as a supererogatory kind of obedience none is oblig'd unto upon any other score, but that of its being enjoyn'd and prescrib'd. Yea, there is a necessity that he who follows such a perverse and sinistruous course in the one, must do so in the other also: when the Acts of the Will cannot but own a proportion unto those of the Understanding, upon which they

are essentially subsequent and depending, and to which the obligation must be both prior, and at least equal to that of their own selves. And therefore St. *Peter* (2. *Epist. ch.* 3. *v.* 18.) does more than insinuate an equal Duty of advancing in Holiness, and Faith; when he exhorts all to *Grow in Grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*; the whole importance of the Verb, *Grow*, falling no less upon the *Knowledge*, than *Grace*, he so recommends. Neither is there any thing more clear to this purpose, than that of the *Ephes. chap.* 4. *ver.* 12, to 15. Where it is not purely the *Unity of the Faith*, which the Apostle intends should *perfect the Saints, till they all come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulnesse of Christ*; but the *Faith* it self, and the *Knowledge of the Son of God*. Since that Unity is but a circumstance subsequent to the Faith, which is only the thing able to produce such an advancement; and is only considerable as a mean to preserve the purity and truth of it; in so far as there being but one Faith, the unanimous

mous conſpiration of all that profeſſe it renders the creeping in of any Errour into any part of its whole Syſteme, impoſſible, *viz.* ſo long as that Unity continues; as having blockt up all the avenues by which it could have only got entrance, ſuch as Diſcord and Strife. Hence he goes on *ver.* 17, 18. And conſequently to which he prayes (Phil. chap. 1. ver. 9.) that their *love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgement.*

17. And the truth is, could thoſe few Articles of the Chriſtian Faith, which may ſerve to conduct the ſimple and unlearned unto Heaven, be thought fully to comprize all that ought to be called abſolutely neceſſary for Salvation, when yet all who move in any higher Orb of induements are oblig'd to know moe than thoſe; one might as well ſay that ſuch general Propoſitions as only a poor ignorant Idiot were able to comprehend, were all *thoſe*, which could be call'd abſolutely evident with reſpect to Mankind in general: which none can be ſo much an Idiot as to imagine. Likewiſe ſuppoſe that

that twenty men were each of them resting to me a thousand pounds, and non but one or two were worth so much, some having but nine hundred, some but eight, some four, some three, and some not an hundred at all, but single twenty, or ten, or five, or only one. Now suppose also that I to whom they were endebted, were content to take from every one what he was able to pay, and thereupon to acquite him. Pray, can it be said that one, or two, or ten, or an hundred, or any thing lesse than the whole thousand pounds, was that, which, absolutely and materially taken, with regard to all the twenty men that were my Debters, was sufficient to pay me of the total Sum? Assuredly none will do it, who understands but what such expressions use to signifie, and how they are to be interpreted. Any minute application here is so very obvious, that it could not be pertinent too.

18. But further, we know how greatly it is debated whether or not the expres and distinct knowledge even of the Christi-

Chriſtian Religion it ſelf, be ſo indiſpenſibly neceſſary for Salvation, as that even thoſe, whoſe circumſtances renders it quite impoſſible for them ever to enjoy thoſe requiſite means whereby they could come to the ſufficient notice of it, cannot be capable of being ſaved, becauſe of that ignorance. It is true there is no ſmall probability from the Scriptures for enclining us to embrace the Affirmative. But on the other hand, it is hard to get over the Negative before it be firſt made out, that God does not accept of that ſincere intention, which univerſally diſpoſes one to believe whatever ſhall be ſufficiently atteſted unto him to have been revealed by God, when that which in particular is accounted as *ſuch* is not *ſo*; and therefore that even an innocent errour, or ignorance as to *this*, does prejudge the honeſty of that general purpoſe whereby the mind was ſubjected unto whatever it ſees bearing the Seal of Divine veracity upon it, even tho it only miſtook in the particulars becauſe of the impoſſibility in ſuch circumſtances

not

not to have fail'd; and ſo that God requires more from men, than what in their reſpective capacities and eſtates it is poſſible for them to grant. And conſequently, before that thorny queſtion, bandied with ſo much argument on both ſides, be once reſolv'd; the Chriſtian Religion it ſelf cannot be ſaid to be abſolutely neceſſary for Salvation, even as it regards all Mankind in general: and the abſolute ſufficiency of Faith muſt be taken, not from the *material Object*, but from that general Act of it, *the believing all that God ſayes, to be true*; ſuppoſing that upon the uſe of all moral diligence there can no conviction be had of any *Particular* that GOD did indeed reveal; and that an univerſal promptitude of mind to embrace whatſoever can be found to have proceeded from ſuch an Authority, does atteſt the ingenuity of theſe endeavours that were imployed in it. And who does not ſee that nothing would be more extravagantly impertinent to the preſent purpoſe than thus to refound that abſolute neceſſity, of which all along we have

have been ſpeaking, upon that which is ſo infinitly far unconcerned in the affair, that it is all one to it, however that ſhould go: when that general Act of Faith, is at that rate ſufficient to compound for whatever defect may be in any *particular material Object* to which it is applyed. But this was already conſidered in the fourth Paragraph.

19. Let us therefore conclude that, as nothing can ſuffice for the Salvation of any, meerly upon the account of the *material Object*, and abſtracting from the relation to particular perſons, but the whole Syſteme of that Faith which was generally reveal'd with reſpect to mankind in groſs, ſo as that every man, *abſolutely conſidered*, is oblig'd to an expreſs and diſtinct belief of all the ſeveral Articles of the Chriſtian Religion, that were at all reveal'd by CHRIST himſelf, or his Holy Spirit, with a deſign'd ſubſerviency to Holineſs and Vertue; and he is not capable of Bliſs ſo long as any of them is not *explicitely* and *poſitively* believ'd by him; not only becauſe the not believing of it, would reject

reject what GOD himself has affirm'd with convincing enough evidence, and so would give him the lie; but especially, because it would deprive of that which has an intrinsick regard unto that inward Sanctity and Righteousness, and those elevated performances which the Gospel requires: As all this, I say, is irrefragably manifest by reason of what has been said; so it is, that the Necessary and Essential Points for Salvation, as they are *absolutely considered with respect to all Mankind*, must comprize *the whole material Object* of Faith, in so far as it has any *intrinsick tendency* to ennoble and perfite the Souls of Men; and therefore must be as far extended as the common obligation that lyes upon Mankind to believe the Gospel, does any ways reach. And it is of all such that I mean, when I say that the Gospel is plain and evident in the Necessaries; the *plainness* and *evidence* being absolute at that rate, at which the Necessaries are; to wit, as Mankind in the general is only regarded by either. Wherefore let every one cry out with that poor

man

man in the Gospel, *I believe, Lord Jesus help my unbelief*; and that as much upon the account of the *extensiveness*, as of the *firmness* of the assent. Not that I would involve any in those mazes of Controversie and Scholastick Subtilties, which are more apt to *confound*, than *edifie*; but that with humble, and ingenuous, and sincere endeavours they would assiduously consult those Means which God has appointed for instructing the World what it is he would have as well Believ'd, as Practis'd, with *David's* Blessed man, *meditating in the law of the Lord both day and night*. For there is no fear, but he who looks upon himself as the most happily arriv'd at the highest point of Learning and Acuteness, will find it task enough to drain or exhaust that *Fountain of living waters, which springs up to life everlasting*.

## Section XXVI.

1. WE have now had before our eyes the whole Scheme and Platform of God's Revelation to Mankind, and have trac'd it all along from its first commencement even in Paradise, ay and while it expir'd and determined with the lives of the holy Apostles of Jesus Christ. And we have seen how infinitely vouchsafing and gracious he has been to his Church in all its several Periods and Revolutions: how very punctual, and condescending, and particular, and express, in manifesting Himself and his Will to the World: and that whether we consider the *extrinsick*, or *intrinsick sufficiency* of the Manifestation; whether the sufficient evidence of its own *being* and *self*, or of those things which it discovered, & were necessary for mankind for attaining that great end and design for which it was created and redeem'd. Neither know I any thing now wanting entirely to ascertain us of the truth of both, but these two, which hitherto have for the most

moſt part been ſtill ſuppos'd as unqueſtionable; ſo that I would not interrupt the threed of the Diſcourſe with them; *viz.* that thoſe Prodigies & Miraculous Works, which have been alleadged, were the moſt uncontrolable and ſufficient Argument that could have been wiſh'd in behalf of the Divine Authority of thoſe Doctrines in whoſe favours they appear'd; and that the Matter of Fact was really ſo, as it has been here ſet down.

2. As for the firſt; It is evident that the wonted and ordinary courſe of Nature is impoſſible to be any wiſe altered, but by a Power equal to that which at firſt jumpt it into being. Becauſe there requires equal force to make a thing work, either *contrary* unto, or *above* theſe endowments which it naturally does enjoy, as at firſt to make its own ſelf; ſince in that caſe there is the production of an Effect without that propottion of a Natural Cauſe, which were neceſſarily requiſite for it, were its own ſelf alone unaſſiſted by any higher ſtrength, left to perform ſuch a feat: and ſuch a production is cer-

tainly accompanied with all the difficulty that Creation it self can be aggravated withal; when the most of *this* can be, *the producing a thing out of nothing*; and all *that* is there; that of the effect which transcends the immediate Cause, which was employed in the production of it, being no less out of nothing, than any thing can be imagin'd to be. Whence it is manifest that only GOD, who was the Author of Nature, can so dispose of it at his pleasure, as to make it *outdo* or *counteract* its own self. Nay such a stupendious effect evidently demonstrats the existence of a Deity and Supream Being, tho that were not done before; when it does so, that there is some such uncontrolable Power as is able to draw something out of that which is just its contrary, to wit, nothing. And if any of those late men who are so eager to propagate Atheistical Principles, will have this very Power to be called that of Nature, or Nature it self, he gives but GOD another Name, than that he uses to pass under; tho upon the base design of con-

confounding him with what owes its being allanerly to his own good pleaſure; that thereby he might the more eaſily ſhuffle himſelf out of any at all, and get the notion of a Miracle, which he ſees ſo palpably to confute his attempts that way, quite daſht out of the World, as the greateſt Boggle that could daſtard or affright him; becauſe then every Production would be *natural*, or that which only Nature iſſued forth. 'Tis true, that it is as natural to GOD to produce that which we call a Miracle, as it is natural to any created Beeing to exert it ſelf in its cuſtomary manner of operation; ſince the Power of GOD eminently contains whatever effect is but ſo much as *poſſible*, neither can *any* exceed thoſe it forces, which being without limits, are not capable to be ſurpaſt. And ſo, abſolutely ſpeaking, there can be no Miracle at all. But this is the moſt impertinent to our purpoſe that any thing could be: when we are preciſely noticing the production of an effect beyond the exigency or power of its immediat ſecond cauſe; if that can be

called a Cause which of its own self was not able to have produc'd it. And such a production we call a Miracle; and it is when that appears that we are to be resolv'd whether or not it be a sufficient and manifest demonstration of the Divine Authority; so as that it is altogether impossible but GOD must have asserted that truth which is attended with any real Miracle to confirm it.

3. And that it is so, is no lesse certain. For to conceit that GOD would communicate his Omnipotence to be a stale and promoter unto any Forgery or Cousenage that vain-glorious and designing men could set themselves to advance, were, not only blasphemously to asperse him with that blackest character which himself has burnt upon the forehead of him who was a *Lyar from the beginning*, and so account of him under no better notion, than that of the *Father of lies*; but also sacrilegiously to rob and despoil him of all possible means of expressing any thing of his mind any wise convincingly to the world, or entertaining that correspondency

dency between him and them, which the ſecond Section of this Diſcourſe did repreſent to be ſo neceſſary in order to his concerning himſelf with their affairs here below: unleſſe he would immediately impart himſelf unto the Souls and Spirits of men by ſuch manifeſt illapſes of his own Being and Eſſence into theirs, as it were impoſſible for them not to perceive them at that ſame clear and diſtinct rate at which they are conſcious of their own ſelves; which, as it were unreaſonable for every ſingle man to deſire any thing like it, ſo for him to do ſo, were wholly to defeat all that this Diſcourſe has ſtill walkt upon, *viz. only ſuch a ſufficient manifeſtation of his Will as is enough rationally to induce a free and vertuous obedience.* Becauſe to take away all *particular deſign* from thoſe ſignal exertions of his infinit Power, or yet but to allow them ſuch a *promiſcuous one* as could never determine them allanerly to the abetting of Truth more than Falſehood, were to leave him nothing imaginable whereby he could give any infallible proof or evi-

evidence when it was himself indeed that intended to reveal something unto Mankind: since whatever he could produce for that effect, could never in reason be assented unto; when there would be the like Authority for both the contradictories, and as insuperable an argument would militate against any of them, as what could induce to the preferring it before the other: and so the Judgement of all whom he did addresse, could not but hover pendulous betwixt the two combating extreams, in the irresolute suspense which of them to incline or fall to. And these are such absurdities as will not readily down with any, who can but acknowledge there can be a Miracle, or a GOD at all. And therefore on all conscience we are obliged to think, that he has so reserv'd the management of that Power, by which they can only be wrought, unto his own Omnipotent self, as not to lend it unto any, but those whom he has commissionated to declare some part of his Mind and Will to the World; that so the broad Seal of Heaven being

affixt

affixt to their Warrand, none may justly doubt of that Authority with which he has invested them.

4. Yet after all this we must confesse that there may be such false and counterfeit Wonders, as may so critically resemble those which are the most real, that even the most serious Observers may be put to it, to discover wherein the mystery of them does lie. Thus many have been performed, either by the power of the Devil, whose subtile and agile nature renders him able to atchieve such strange Operations as we poor men know not well how to resolve into their natural Causes; or else by prestigiatory and jugling Arts, whereby a nimble hand does so swiftly and dexterously go about a Trick as the most wary of our senses cannot speedily enough follow all its several delusive and invisible Motions. And with these many *have been*, and *may be* so amus'd, as to be seduc'd and led astray into the most gross and abominable Errours and Absurdities.

5. But

5. But first, Because there is so much *Artificial* Stones in the World, is it therefore a good consequence that there are no true Diamonds? Or have we no good Guineys, because there may be some but all guilded Glass? And if, in these and the like cases, the counterfeit does not derogate from the *reality* of what is true; neither can it in the present. Nay 'tis no small evidence that there are true Miracles, that there are so many false ones: when otherwise, that would be the only instance wherein there were a Counterfeit, without a Reality, of which it were *that*. And secondly, It is impossible that the *imitation* can be so infinitely exact, but that a diligent scrutiny in the thing it self, & the circumstances in which it is brought forth, will certainly detect it to be but *such*. Other wise, besides how much it is incumbent to Providence never to suffer any Imposture so to dog it at the heels, upon the account of what was said in the third Paragraph; every thing behov'd to be depriv'd of those *criterions* and distinguishing marks whereby it may be known

to

to be its own ſelf, and not to be another; which is quite impoſſible to be imagin'd without a *ſpecifical identity* between them at leaſt; and that can never interveen betwixt Truth and Falſhood, even in any Concret whatſoever; as is beyond all doubt. But thirdly, Theſe differencing Notes are ſo palpable in behalf of thoſe real Miracles which always atteſted the true Religion, that, as the greateſt competition we ever read of, was that betwixt the Magicians and *Moſes*; ſo the diſparity was never leſs manifeſt, than then; when even thoſe ſame Magicians (however much ſo, as well in Morality, as in Naturals) were ſo evidently baffled, as to be forc'd themſelves to confeſs *the finger of God*. And let the compariſon be ſtated betwixt any Pretenders, and what was produc'd concerning the Apoſtles alone, in the eighteenth Section; and I doubt not but even Impudence it ſelf would bluſh ſooner, than alledge any the leaſt ſhadow of an equality; eſpecially if all the circumſtances were ſufficiently conſidered. But if the accompliſhing

of

of ancient Prophecies be reckoned with those Prodigies and Miracles which this Discourse has mentioned, then what dare be so hugely effronted as to attempt the parallel of those Credentials whereby both the Jewish and Christian Religions were confirmed: when in them such a Wisdom and Power had conspir'd together, as nothing but that which was infinite and divine, could ever have the very remotest claim unto *either*, and far less *both* of them. Besides what may be said of the excellency of the Doctrine it self, in behalf of which these are, upon *this* account, even almost supererogatorily brought to be demonstrative.

6. It is true the World is much nois'd with a succession of Miracles, no less signal and manifest, than were those of Christ and his Apostles themselves, and that by a generation of Men who pretend them for such Doctrines, as are so very uncapable of being now attested with Miracles (after those their Contradictories were so much irrefragably witnessed by them at the first broaching of Christianity), that, were it

true

true which they do aver, they would, in ſtead of gaining any credit to their own Deſigns, upon their account, but enervate the proof in general, and overturn all the certainty that could be deriv'd from ſuch Credentials to vouch the moſt ſincere and ingenuous one of any body elſe; when two ſuch irreconciliable Enemies, as Contradictories, can never be equally teſtified; and, if they were, both the witneſſes would *therefore* mutually confound each other. And yet we hear no louder clamours, than what are perpetually grating in our ears for thoſe, which, if they be Miracles at all, muſt undoubtedly be vouchſaf'd by the infinite Author of them, to evidence, either his Providence in general, or his particular concern in ſome vertuous Favourites; and not to own any of thoſe Tenents, unto which he has before been ſo very unkind and diſobliging, and which even an Angel come from Heaven could not preach without being accurſed.

7. But to treat them with ſo much reſpect as even the ſuppoſal of being true carries

carries along with it, cannot but affront that authentick and illuſtrious evidence, whereby the certain being and reality of thoſe, which were wrought by our Saviour and his Apoſtles, was rendered ſo manifeſt and uncontrovertible. Since there was never any thing, even alleadged by the Heathen Prieſts themſelves, more notoriouſly fabulous, than they are: as has been of late made palpable by a Diſcourſe, on ſet purpoſe expoſing them to the contempt and drollery of every one, who has but eyes to read, or ears to hear it. And therefore all I ſhall ſay, is First, If they enjoy ſuch a Power of working Miracles, either it is for confirming of their Doctrine, or not? If not, then wherefore draw they any Arguments from them for that end? If it be, then wherefore do they not exerciſe it, as that it may ſerve the deſign for which it is entruſted? For ſurely there can no account be given how GOD ſhould beſtow ſuch a Power upon deſign of confirming by it thoſe Truths which himſelf has reveal'd, unleſs it were that it might

be

be ſo employ'd as to convince thoſe who are to be converted unto the belief of them? But how can ſuch be thereby convinc'd, unleſs, either they did ſee the wonderful effects of it themſelves, or hear of them from ſuch unexceptionable witneſſes as did ſee them, and are of unqueſtionable credite and authority in whatever they teſtifie. Now was ever that Power, which theſe men ſo confidently boaſt, yet exerted in the midſt of theſe who were their enemies, or were to be Proſelyted unto their Opinions; as was that which CHRIST and his Apoſtles did ſhow? Was it not alwayes huddl'd up in corners, and only trick'd withal before thoſe who were already perſwaded of the Doctrines which it was ſaid to confirm: as even the pretended managers of it themſelves do acknowledge? For my own part, tho for ſome years I travell'd all thoſe Countreys that are the moſt fond about the pretence of ſuch Miracles; Yet ſave it was that I ſaw two *John Baptiſts* Skulls, one at *Amiens*, and another at *Rome* (the nether Jaw being kept at

ſome

some third place unmultiplied), and some other such Prodigies of Relicts, my eyes never yet beheld any more of them, than those *Votive Tables* with which their Churches are all hung over, to the same purpose (for ought I could learn) that were those ancient Temples wherein some Pagan God had the glory to be Enshrin'd. And therefore such a skulking Power of Miracles cannot but be so far from answering that intention wherefore any was ever yet communicated; that tho it were never so much vouched by the most credible relation of those among whom it is said to be; yet none in reason could but suspect, that either these were deluded themselves by the overweening force of their own wishes and imaginations, or else made it their study to impose the meerest fourbs and impostures upon others, that ever was yet set upon the attempt of gaining repute in the World. And indeed I have ever strang'd how that people is not asham'd to own such a Power to be constantly resident among them, and yet never be able to give

any

any other demonstration that it is so, but those Legendary Stories, which a body would think had been only contriv'd to make Experiment of the blindest credulity wherewith ever men was yet besotted and befool'd.

8. And secondly, Was not the true and genuine Christian Religion abundantly confirmed by Miracles in the first propagation? And had not the World then sufficient ground to yield up their assent in the belief of what was so palpably attested? Wherefore then should these men so much busie themselves to keep up what the foregoing Paragraph has shewed none can justly acknowledge but for a meer Pretext at most? Do they fancy, that all that CHRIST and his Apostles did in testimony of their Doctrine, had not been enough to do the feat, unless they should have assisted them with their little Mountebank and Gypsie Tricks? But either their Tenents stands in need of Miracles to procure them credite, or not? If not, then wherefore do they afford so much occasion to *charge God foolishly*, or rather

of foolishness; when thus with a *superfluity of naughtiness*, he would prostitute his Almighty Power to an equally *needless* and *trifling* design? If they do, then they must be something else, than those which were taught by CHRIST and his Apostles? because he must be something else than a Christian, who dares say that any of these, were, like so many bastard notions, left out of their fatherly and indulgent care, or not sufficiently provided with Credentials to attest them.

9. But it is enough to disparage their pretence unto me, that they have abus'd it themselves with such ridiculous and foppish instances of its energy and force, as none without something more than a common blasphemy could ascribe them to that Power which it feigns, and presumes upon. An account whereof any may have in that forementioned Discourse writ by the excellent Doctor *Stillingfleet*, who has quite forestall'd all that can be said on this Subject. As also of the equal credibility with which they are related, with that of the most fam'd and plausible Wonders

ders that ever were the peculiar alleadgiance of those we talk of. Besides, has there not been *so many*, and *such considerable* Cheats and Forgeries discovered in that pretence, and that not only by open and avowed enemies, but also by one Faction of these who lay claim to it themselves, against another of the same stamp; as are but too much to discredite and baffle it for ever? I remember that at *Douay* in *Flanders*, I had from one Father *Platel*, a learned Jesuite, an original Copy (Printed in *Anno* 1509.) of that little Book Entituled, *De quatuor Hæresiarchis Ordinis Prædicatorum*, &c. *apud Suitenses in Civitate* Bernensi *combustos. A. D.* 1509. In which I read the detection of such an Imposture, as abounded with all the circumstances which can be but imagin'd as desirable for confuting the most feasable of those who never yet have mett with the like misfortune. And in this little Piece the good Father was so much concerned, that he told me, when he lent it, he had of a long time been searching for it, both with much cost and pains, and now having

found it, he hugg'd it as a thing no less dear to him than his own heart and soul. So zealous was he to have the *Dominican* Miracles, at least, fall under that disgrace and reproach, which is but the just deserving of these, which use to be so impudently vaunted and bragg'd of by the whole Communion wherein he liv'd. And he must be a great stranger to the World who knows not how industrious and eager, and how *successful* too, the *Jesuits*, and *Franciscans*, and *Dominicans*, and *Carmelites*, &c. are in their mutual Inquests upon those Miracles which their several Orders do pretend. So that, tho all of them talk big things of those that are Catholick, and especially of their own peculiar concernment; yet there is nothing more palpable, than their jealousie of one another, and that every one of them holds all the rest for as arrant liars, as we do them all together. Indeed it has often been the matter of my admiration, that, since the Head of their Church, on so many other respects, gives shrewd occasion to the World, to suspect him too

much related to that Man, whom the Apostle so punctually describes in the second Chapter of his second Epistle to the *Thessalonians*, he should so far compleat the Character in this too, as to *come after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceitfulness of unrighteousness:* when all those, who adore him, cannot but be conscious to themselves, that the only effect which such a Pretence of Miracles, as is theirs, is likely to produce, cannot be any other, than for those who *receive the love of the truth*, to upbraid him with this construction of it.

10. But in a word, unless they could work Miracles at their pleasure, and would do so before us, who challenge them so much to do it (and in all reason, because they would have us to believe upon their account), and so would submit them to as impartial a scanning, as were those of CHRIST and his Apostles, so that our own senses might give us the immediate information of them, and it might be these only that could be impos'd upon, if

there were any fraud and deceit used in the affair; and therefore unless they would perform as mighty deeds as did our Saviour and his Apostles themselves, of an equal *number* and *quality* (for those who work Miracles at their pleasure may undoubtedly do so); they must have us excused before we do so much as give credite that they have the power of working any at all. Because that which we look upon as the distinguishing Note and Standard of true Miracles from false, is for one to work them at his own arbitriment and liking; and so, to do that, at all times, and before all persons, and in any whatsoever matter and subject; so as did those blessed men which wrought those in the first confirmation of that holy Religion, which, because of them, we do profess. For that same Power which can be sufficient for any one Miracle, must be so for any other: Since it must be infinite, according to what was said in the second Paragraph. And he that has it for confirming any Doctrine, must either be able to imploy it at his pleasure, or else

no

no effect of it he could produce, could be interpreted but as that of *chance*, and not of *design*, and so not as intended for such an end. And so let these Miracle-mongers take us but once at this pinch, of obliging us at that rate to confesse that they have the Gift of Miracles indeed; and then we shall tell them what next shall be said. But there is no fear they put us to such a direct answer as that would come to. Wherefore let non fancy to themselves that ever their pretence has done any thing to invalidate that argument, which was drawn from Miracles, to demonstrate the truth of that Doctrine in whose behalf they were so signally wrought; or yet ever shall do it.

## Section XXVII.

1. AS to the the Matter of Fact; that is so very irrefragable and Manifest, that no affair could possibly arrive to a more desireable issue, than to have it brought thus to depend allanerly upon such an Evidence. For if those

Books

Books out of which we have taken it, can be proved to be genuine, and really to have been write, by those Persons whose Names they bear, and so entertain'd in the World, even *then*, as *now* they are; it is impossible but things must have truly stood so then, as they represent them. Because it had been impossible that such Books could ever have been so universally embrac'd as the unquestionable Records of such Sacred Truths, at a time when all the world could have as easily known whether they were faithful in the account they gave of them, as whether the Sun was shining or not; if they had not been true in their narrative, and affairs had indeed been otherwise than they related they were. Since all that has been said before about the impossibility that ever the Christian Religion should have so prevailed in the World, had it been no more but a Cheat and Delusion, argues equally here, upon the account of the considerableness and circumstances of the subject Matter which these Books do contain: when the *Esse* pro-

*probability*; and the *more of importance* there was in it, the *leſſe poſſibility* there was, that they could have been ſo publickly believed without a proportionable evidence of the truth thereof; and therefore if they were believ'd at that rate, there behov'd by the rule of contraries, to have been ſuch an evidence of that; as is manifeſt. Nay, abſtracting what may be ſaid upon this reſpect, that any Hiſtory ſo groſsly falſe, as they had been, ſo that they had been falſe at all, ſhould have ever been accounted of as true, and far more as infallible, by ſo many men, which could not but be ſenſible that it was ſo falſe; were as great madneſſe to think, as it would have been for all theſe to have ſo accounted of it. We may but imagine what acceptance any Book would now get among us, did it romance ſuch another Story as that of the Holy Bible, and yet endeavour to vent it, as no fiction or impoſture. And it were too arrogant for us to conceit that we had ingroſs'd all the Wit and Prudence that has been in the World, and that thoſe of former

Ages

Ages did not see an inch before their Noses, as well as we. And so, if it be once granted that those heavenly Oracles were write recently upon the transaction of those Matters which they record, and were so universally receiv'd, as we suppose they were, it cannot be deny'd but what they say was certainly as true, as that they say it.

2. Now that thus it was, is as undoubtedly certain, as ever was any thing, that depended upon meer Testimony, as all Matters of Fact can only do. For never was any thing vouched by a more unquestionable Testimony, than that those were then write, and so receiv'd (it is all one to me if it be in behalf of any one of the four Evangelists, since any of those does our businesse, as to the Matter of Fact of the New Testament, and confirms those Books which contain that of the Old, besides what can be said upon their own score). So that, unless all the History of the World precedent to that of our own days, be quite discarded as fabulous, and chymerical (and who would not

his

hiſs ſuch a ridiculous ſceptick out of his company who would do ſo), none can ſo much as make the leaſt hover about it; There being ſtill an uninterrupted univerſal Teſtimony thereof running thorow all the interveening Ages from *that*, wherein it was done, to *this*, wherein we do now equally own it with our Predeceſſors, and becauſe they did ſo. Neither derive we ſuch a ſuffrage only from thoſe Anceſtours that were eſpecially ſo to us in our Religion, but alſo from thoſe who were ſo in regard of that common reſpect which ordinarily render's men to be ſuch: ſince both Jewiſh and Gentile, as well as Chriſtian Writers, do unanimouſly concur to witneſſe all that at preſent we deſire, *viz. that ſuch Books were then write*, and *ſo publickly embrac'd*. Indeed had their original been to trace backward to ſome indefinite time, there had been all the reaſon in the world to have ſuſpect them to have ſtole clancularly into the World. But when we know the years that we have to run back, and that we are oblig'd to go no farther

length

length, than we use to be carried by the most certain and renown'd Histories the World now has; it were some strangely peculiar kind of dis-ingenuity, for any, more to reject the Writings of St. *Matthew* or St. *John*, than those of *Livy*, *Salust*, *Tacitus*, &c.

3. But either Christianity had a being before these Books were writ and received, or not? If not, but that in its very first broaching that past? Then we have all we would. If it had, and was spread over the world, as now it is? Then how came they to be lookt upon as such, as could not but have been of an equal date with that of the Religion of whose birth they gave an account, since they carry the Names of those who were its first Apostles and Propagators? That on a sudden Books should appear, and pretend to have been writ a considerable time ago, by men that were now dead and extinct, is so disparaging a circumstance to their authority, that he must not be versed in the import of that, who would yield them any favour. But that Books should be

asserted

asserted to have been alwayes visible and extant, and universally receiv'd, nay and quoted by all other Books, and that since the dayes of these Authors whom they are fathered upon, when yet they were not, is so impossible to be imagin'd, that it is not more so, how a City, or Nation that never was before, could immediatly arrive to the repute of such antiquity, as have those who can deduce their Pedegree with the most solemn and undoubtable advantages; especially when these Books, are of no less consideration, than is, not one Town, or Countrey, but the whole World. Indeed it is no wonder for things that are not the object of Sense, such as matters of Opinion and Theory, to steal themselves insensibly and by slow imperceptible motions into the pretence of an old Genealogy and Date: Nay even Practices, and such fluctuant and unsettled matters, may grow up to a Custome, whose first Origine and rise may not be capable to be found out by the most diligent retrogradation whatsoever. But that a fixt permanent visible thing,

such

such as a Book, multiplied all over the earth into almost innumerable Copies (as, according to the supposition, it was; for upon that very multiplication, the question does proceed, and may be re-stated), should now commence into the credite of having been so yesterday, when this is the first day it ever had any being, is so very unaccountable, that even any of the former Instances, about a Town or a Nation, were infinitely less so. And that tho it be also true, that the World is pestered with many spurious and illegitimate ones, which pretend unto both Authors and Dates, which never were theirs. For never was there any such, of so *universal reception* and *concernment*, as we find the Bible to be amongst Christians, and as it always was, for ought that any man alive can say to the contrary, unless it were meerly to say so. Besides what may be brought from other no less eminent disparties. And that there has been even suppositious Gospels, does but further confirm our Argument. For these have always been detected to be such;

such; and unless there had been true ones, they durst never have attempted to vent themselves; as out of what has been said appears altogether palpable.

4. As to the evidence and certainty of Testimony, I know not by what Rules some have endeavoured to discredite them, as not only the lowest kind of all under those names; but as those which involves no more than do's a simple *maybe*; because that which, they say, may possibly be false. This is indeed an error which tends as much to overturn all Commerce in the World, as any thing can be; as has been largely shewed by many elegant Writers. But it is no greater any where, than in Philosophie. And this I undertake to demonstrate thus. *A moral certainty* (for that is the certainty of Testimony) is at last refounded into that which is *Metaphysical*; and therefore, is no less, than is it; as is clear. That it is refounded in a *Metaphysical* Certainty, appears from this, that it is a Certainty grounded upon an event which supposes a necessary and determin'd cause,

and

and ſo which could not poſſibly or Metaphyſically be otherwiſe, or not reſult from that cauſe. For the event upon which Moral Certainty is built, is a conſtant determin'd event flowing from a cauſe undetermined and contingent in its own ſelf, and therefore determin'd and neceſſary, as to the production of that effect, by ſomething elſe. An example is this, for ten thouſand times Cinques to be thrown up uninterruptedly by ten thouſand ſeveral Dice; or for a million of Horſes to return in a mile of way which they had lately pav'd before, ſo, as that not one foot of 'em all does not exactly beat thoſe ſame individual ſteps which were trode by it before. Here is a conſtant event, and a contingent cauſe, from which it proceeds. And I ſay that that event, providing it be, could not have been from that contingent cauſe as ſuch, and undetermin'd by any other thing from without, even *Metaphyſically* ſpeaking. Since it is as neceſſary for a *contingent cauſe* to work *contingently*, or produce various, and at neareſt only *generically* related effects; as

for

for a *neceſſary*, to work *neceſſarily*; or produce ſuch effects as are *conſtant* and *ſpecifically* the ſame; otherwiſe every one might invade each others nature, and all the Metaphyſicks would have nothing wherewith to limite and reſtrain them. And ſo ſuch a contingent cauſe, as ten thouſand Dice, left to its own intrinſick power and determination, could not run conſtantly in one perpetual courſe of Cinques, for ten thouſand throws; but behov'd as much to vary the ſeveral combinations of their ſeveral numbers, as proportionally the contingency which aroſe from their exactly cubal form, not inclining more to one ſide than another, and thoſe ten thouſand caſual motions which gave them the fling, did require. And therefore, if ſuch a conſtant currency of Cinques were thrown up, it could not but be aſcrib'd to ſomething elſe, than meerly that contingent cauſe; and conſequently to that which were not ſo; and by a further conſequence, to that which were *neceſſary*, and did produce it *neceſſarily*: Which was the thing to be demonſtrated.

5. It is true that it is not impoſſible that ten thouſand Dice, ſhould ten thouſand times caſt up all Cinques, ſo that they be conſidered without reſpect, to the immediate Agent by which they are thrown: for GOD may make them do ſo. But as they are in the hand of ſuch an infinite Power, which at its pleaſure can order all their ſeveral motions, they cannot be lookt upon as any contingent cauſe, and ſo no wonder tho a conſtant event flow from them. It is alſo true, that, abſolutely ſpeaking there is an equal aptitude and exigence in all nature, even for ſo many Dice to be all thrown up into Cinques, a ſecond time, and after that, a third, and ſo on (and that by one not capable to manage and determine them any otherwiſe but at an adventure), that there was before they were caſt at all. But as one Swallow makes not Spring, ſo one ſuch accident cannot amount to make up any conſtant event: and as it is abſolutely conſidered it is but only one. Wherefore there can be no number of throws ſufficient to conſtitute a conſtancy in the event, but ſuch as is ſo conſiderable

as to

to fall under the rigour of that denomination. And every one of them muſt have a reſpect to the whole. And for ſuch an event to proceed from a cauſe altogether contingent, without it be determin'd ſomewhere elſe, than from it ſelf, is I think ſufficiently made manifeſt to be impoſſible. And therefore, ſince if ſuch an event be, it behov'd to be, becauſe from a neceſſary cauſe working neceſſarily, and ſo could not be otherwiſe, or from a contingent cauſe; that Certainty which is built upon it, is of that nature, of which are all ſuch, as are ſuperſtructed upon the metaphyſical neceſſity of things.

6. The only difficulty is, when there is ſuch a conſtancy in the event, as thus ſuffices to demoſtrate that it was not the iſſue of meer Chance and Fortune. But that muſt be left to every mans prudent conſideration, as to particular caſes. It is enough to me, that in the general, ſuch a conſtant event does infer a *proportionable*, and therefore *neceſſary* cauſe. And as for the preſent caſe, there is undoubtedly ſuch a conſtancy in the Teſtimony

we have alledged; that even that in the number of Cinques can hardly outdo it. Besides what is to be deduc'd from the *improbability of the thing written*, as to its own self, and the *common averseness of Mankind to embrace it*, considered *with relation to that universal reception which* has been suppos'd. For that concurs with no unconsiderble moment and weight to make up the Morality of the evidence.

7. The certainty then of our Christian Religion depends not upon any thing that could have been false. For (to go on by steps) that there is such a constant Testimony that these Books are genuine, is as certain, as any thing can be, that is the Object of Sense (which I suppose cannot be deceiv'd in its due operations): That such a Testimony could not be false, is as certain, as any thing that can be Morally so: That those Books could not therefore have writ things otherwise than they were, is of the like certainty. And that those things did demonstrate the infallible truth of that, which they asserted, is of the greatest of all. And all these, I perswade my self, are evident to every

body

body who has read thus far of this Discourse.

## Section XXVIII.

1. NOW we cannot dream or imagine that after Almighty GOD had gain'd the whole world to the faith and obedience of that Religion for which he had made so long, and so solemn preparations, and which he did propagate and diffuse with such irresistible and convincing evidence; He should then have abandon'd it unto all the distractions and confusions, all the enormities and irregularities, that bigot and fond zeal, or wicked and debaucht nature, could hurry men into. This certainly, as it had been very unkind, and even ruinous to all men, so more especially unto the Son of Man, and Himself too, who had so severely suffer'd and smarted for them. And therefore we must, without as much Blasphemy in us, as it would have been seeming cruelty in him, conclude, that at least he has not dealt less favourably with us upon whom the ends of the world have fal'n, than he did with those who were

but

but a-groaning for the great dayes, that have past ours.

2. Assuredly then the Apostles, as they have been shewed punctually to answer that Character which was given of their Office, in §. X. ¶. 2. in all other parts of it; so they were not wanting to do it in this last, *viz.* the leaving behind them some such standing and perpetual Rule of Faith and Manners, as that none might be to seek after what he was to Believe and Do, who did not willingly wink, & blindfold himself. And if they did provide the world with any such thing, then questionless they did also leave it so notour and conspicuous, that, nothing in all Christianity was more so. Wherefore, as all the ill success which the Gospel has had in converting mankind, unto the noblest perfections of Truth and Holiness, so all those many entanglements and discords, wherewith its own Professours are distracted and perplext, ought undoubtedly to be roll'd over upon the pravity and stubbornness of mens corrupt natures, and not upon those altogether sufficient and proper Methods which GOD has appointed to rectifie and sublime them.

3. It

3. It is true that now a-days we have hardly any more eager debates, than about what is this Rule: every Sect and Combination almost of those who even call themselves Christians, having its particular Oracle it consults, and from which it expects its Responses: the *Reformed* its only Bible; the *Romish*, its pretended Infallible Church; the *Socinian*, its Private Reason; and the *Quaker*, its fancied Immediate Inspirations from above: besides the several intestine wranglings and quarrels wherewith all of them almost are canton'd and subdivided amongst themselves. So that never one of them is either Christian upon the same Grounds, or yet resolves his Faith into the same Principles. Yet certainly he who made the Rule of Faith such a standard for all its several Articles, had ill complyed with his design of instituting a Mean by which Mankind might come to the certain knowledge of These, had he left it self as much involv'd in the labyrinth of those intricate Difficulties which so harass and disturb the most learned amongst men, as are those other doubts which to unriddle

it

be principally ordain'd for. And so whatever may be the differences and jangling of Interest, or Passion, have rais'd about it; yet God, who leaves not himself without a Witness, has without all question environed that with a whole Cloud of *more large* and *universal extension*, requiring a *more general* and *extensive*, and so *more manifest* and *irrefragable manifestation*, and *evidence*. But as to defend what has been said in proof of the demonstrative and evident Truth of the Christian Religion against all the Cavils and Batteries of its real Enemies, however much they profess the contrary, will be the task of the first of the following Discourses: So to demonstrate which is that true Rule of Faith, whereby its genuine self, and Doctrines, can be discerned, will be the Work and Design of the second.

*THE END.*